



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

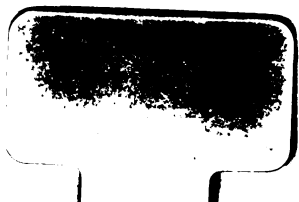
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



600057194W





FROM THISTLES—GRAPES?

BY

MRS. EILOART,

AUTHOR OF "THE CURATE'S DISCIPLINE," "MEG," "ST. BEDE'S,"
ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1870.

[*All Rights Reserved.*]

250. y. 168.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE FIRST DAY OF THE ASSIZES . . .	1
II. THE HORTONS AND THEIR WARD . . .	31
III. PATERFAMILIAS AND HIS CARES . . .	51
IV. THE REV. CHARLES ROSSLYN AT HOME . . .	67
V. MR. ROSSLYN'S PROTÉGÉ . . .	87
VI. A GREAT SCHOLAR . . .	107
VII. THE GIRL OF GENIUS' . . .	123
VIII. IN OAKSTEAD COPSE . . .	144
IX. DR. LANGTON'S RIDE . . .	157
X. GRACE AND HER COUSIN . . .	181
XI. AN AWKWARD MEETING FOR THE DOCTOR . . .	192
XII. A WELCOME HOME . . .	207
XIII. MR. CHUBB IN HIS OWN HOUSE . . .	233
XIV. SPRING HOPES IN AUTUMN HOURS . . .	256
XV. ST. EDGAR'S CHURCH . . .	294

FROM THISTLES—GRAPES?

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE ASSIZES.

AN old town, as old as any in the kingdom, and with such a hushed stillness in its daily life, such a leisurely calm pervading the doings even of its busiest men, that if it had not been for the railway station at one end, and the streams of girls that now and then walked in orderly file through its decorous streets, and whose faces now and then lit up the window-panes of some of the largest and oldest houses in the place—St. Ewald's being renowned for

its boarding-schools for young ladies—you would have thought that the nineteenth century had left it behind altogether in its onward march, and that youth and freshness had been scared away by the grey lichens on its red-tiled roofs, or by the greyer ruins in its old abbey gardens. If there were girls, there were no young men in the town, and, although there was an amply endowed Grammar School, not a great number of boys—and what boys there were went out into the wide world, when they grew older, to seek their fortunes, and win their wives—but very few settled down at St. Ewald's, so that it was no wonder that the population had for the last fifty years been almost stationary. The girls when they had "finished" went back to their homes, so that altogether from one cause or another there was a less amount of wooing and wedding going on in St. Ewald's

than in any other town of its size in the kingdom.

There were a few families of some local importance in the neighbourhood, and these, to a great extent, supported the trade of the town. On its weekly market days it woke to a little feeble life, and on the occasion of its county balls plumed itself upon its superior fashion and gentility. But, as a rule, St. Ewald's was dull to a degree which a Londoner can hardly realize. It did not rest, it rusted. It lay torpid in a never-ending sleep, unbroken by a single dream. If a vulgarian from the outer world you were oppressed, borne down, benumbed by its decorum and gentility. The etiquette of a German ducal court was laxity to the social code of St. Ewald's. Its good families—and excepting the traders they were all good families at St. Ewald's—were of the bluest blood in the county. They were poor, cer-

tainly, but they were rather proud of their poverty, having a vague idea that it was a vulgar thing to be rich, and slightly aristocratic to be in embarrassed circumstances. They had no manufactures, and not much commerce with their neighbours, being an inland town, with no river which was navigable for any but the tiniest sailing boats, within three miles ; but at any rate, if they had nothing else, they had their gentility with which they covered all their deficiencies, as of old a ruined Spanish hidalgo would hide his rags beneath his mantle, and look, and move, and almost feel a king among his fellow-men.

Once a year St. Ewald's might almost be said to live. Once a year there was a stir in its streets, and its hotels were thronged, and its tradespeople opened their shops before half-past nine A.M., and the bright eyes of all the boarding-school girls over

twelve grew brighter, and there was much surreptitious peeping through shrubberies and over window-blinds, and young men were to be seen in the street, and a few fresh faces at the decorous parties which Mrs. Trivet, the wife of the leading solicitor, and Mrs. Marsh, the lady of the Rector of St. Hertha's, duly gave on these occasions. Once a year the dry bones stirred and clothed themselves with some semblance of vitality—for a few days at least—when the summer assizes came round, and it was found that even in the neighbourhood of St. Ewald's people were not so wholly petrified but that they could do a little wickedness as readily there as anywhere else.

Indeed, the calendar of the town was always rather a heavy one. Just as on a Scotch Sabbath people drink double the whiskey they do on any other day, so, generally, if they have nothing else to amuse

themselves with they must sin if only *pour se soulager*. It was really considerate of the lower classes to do so, for they amused not only themselves, but their more aristocratic neighbours; those of them, at least, who were too poor or too indolent to care to spend the season in London. And there were not a few of the more fashionable residents in St. Ewald's who were in that predicament. The bench was always crowded in assize time. Ladies bought new bonnets and renewed their toilettes expressly for the occasion: and people drove in from the neighbourhood and took lunch with their friends, and afterwards went to hear the last new Q.C. or see the leading criminal of the day, just as their wealthier friends in London would attend the opera, and discuss the merits of the leading tenor or the last newly imported *prima donna*.

But the assizes were not often more

crowded than they were on the morning of the 5th of July, 186—. There was an incendiary to be tried who had not contented himself with setting fire to his master's hay-ricks, but had attempted to do so to his dwelling house ; two burglars, one footpad, and a long list of minor offenders. Within the memory of living man, no judge, when he took his seat on the Bench of St. Ewald's Court House, had been presented with white gloves ; but the list of crime this time was so full that it seemed likely the judge presiding in the civil court would have to assist his legal brother when he had cleared off his own cases. The Chief Justice had not yet made his appearance, but the bench was bright as a flower-show ; the solicitors were busy looking over and arranging papers ; the barristers taking their places and glancing over their briefs—those who had them at least—or entering into a little

friendly gossip with each other. Hartley Sharpe, Queen's Counsel, and Leader of the Circuit, was much too busy with sundry documents to be amongst these latter.

He had a long morning's work before him, and had neither time nor inclination for the frivolities that amused his juniors in their idleness. He could have wished them all to have been as silent as himself, but then that might have involved their being as busy; in which case, Hartley Sharpe, Q.C., would no longer have had the lion's share of the business at each assize. But presently a very audible murmur, nay, a laugh in feminine tones reached him, and he turned, with a glance full of rebuke for the impertinent interruption to his thoughts, to the direction whence it proceeded. Mr. Sharpe could frown portentously when he pleased, as many a contumacious witness

had before this experienced, but he could also smile with a sweetness and grace that on a first glance at his large sternly-cut features, would have seemed almost impossible. And he smiled now ; his blandest, as his eye fell on a group of two ladies and a gentleman, seated in the front row near the bench, and indulging themselves, the ladies especially, in comments and questions on the scene before them, which its strangeness, to the latter at least, called forth.

They had forgotten themselves and spoken louder than strict decorum warranted ; but surely even a Q.C. might forgive the disturbance to his thoughts when it came from such breakers of the peace as these. The elder was a matron in her full summer prime, hardly old enough to be the mother of her young companion, but evidently her chaperone. She was fair, with a complexion as fresh and clear as a girl's,

light brown, luxuriant hair, and pleasant, kindly, soft blue eyes : a woman, you might be sure, who had the knack of spoiling every one she came near ; who would humour her husband beyond all reasonable bounds ; mete out indulgencies to servants and children with an unsparing hand. It was impossible for the veriest stranger to look on her and entertain a doubt as to her being both wife and mother, at whose house it would be a temporarysojourn in an earthly elysium of eider down and creature comfort to visit ; and, to sum up all in a word, as “ nice ” a woman as any one need care to know.

Thoroughly “ nice,”—that was the impression Mrs. Horton gave every one who knew her, and this impression only increased by further knowledge. She was not particularly clever, but had plenty of good common sense ; not strikingly handsome, but

always pleasant to look upon; not an elaborate dresser, and never in the extreme height of the fashion, but always appearing in simple well-chosen toilettes. A woman whom you liked the first moment you saw her, and who never let go the liking she had once won.

Her companion was a girl of a little over twenty, with a face whose chief characteristics were its gentleness, purity, and tenderness. A *good* face emphatically,—*that* struck you even more than its beauty, which stole upon you after a time. A face that would lead you to expect more refined culture than depth of intellect from the mind of which it was the index; so that if you were asked to point out your ideal of a young English lady, carefully guarded from her very birth, with all good influences around her, and everything base and ignoble shut out from the sphere of her daily life,

Letitia Lisdale would instinctively occur to you.

She was very lovely too, but it was not a loveliness that took you by storm, as many a face gifted with only an ordinary amount of prettiness might do : it needed a cultivated eye to appreciate the perfect contour of the face, the classical features and the delicate colouring. Her beauty grew upon you—you had to look once and again to see how perfect it was, and how the character of this beauty was enhanced by the refinement and culture that pervaded her whole being. As I have said, it was of an English lady Letitia Lisdale seemed the type—you could not fancy such a face in a cottage or behind a counter—you would never have selected her as the representative of English girls in general. You felt that it would have been as impossible to have brought this beauty to its present

perfection without the fostering influences of training and education, and the constant association with ladies and gentlemen, as to rear camellias in the open air, or to expect the choicest flowers of the garden to spring up of themselves in the thickets of a wood.

She might have been stronger, more self-reliant under a different guardianship to that which she had had, and just as tender and as intrinsically pure, but she would not have been just the sweet exquisitely cultured Letitia Lisdale that she was now. There might be a little conventionalism—a little over-refinement about her, but if there were it seemed so to enhance her still, delicate beauty that you could not wish it otherwise.

The sight of two such faces ought to have been enough to have accounted for the change in Mr. Sharpe, but, unhappily for his gallantry, it is to be feared that if it had not

been for the gentleman who sat between the ladies on the bench—a London solicitor in good practice to whom the Q.C. owed many a brief—Mr. Sharpe's countenance would still have retained the frown it wore when the voices first struck on his ear. They were unquestionably a charming couple, but it was to the elderly gentleman between them that the honey of Mr. Sharpe's smile, and the grace of the bow which accompanied it, were due.

Mr. Hesketh was away from town on a short holiday, and at present the guest of Mrs. Horton, the elder lady by his side. A little business respecting Miss Lisdale, of whom Mr. Horton and himself were jointly guardians, had brought him to St. Ewald's in the first instance, and it had not been very difficult to induce him to prolong his stay, and indulge in a short holiday. And by way of change from excursions to all

the picturesque places in the neighbourhood, or moonlight strolls in the old abbey ruins of which St. Ewald's was so proud—to all of which he had lent himself with the zest of a Londoner out of harness, and determined to enjoy his freedom to the utmost—he had proposed that the ladies should take a little amusement of another sort and visit the Court House. There would be nothing, he knew, this morning, to offend their ears or try their nerves, and it was a piquant interlude in the Arcadian simplicity of his country life to breathe once more a legal atmosphere, and look on, a mere spectator of contests similar to those in which he had so often had a personal interest.

All the lawyer in him woke at the moment he entered the Court, and he was now busy pointing out the leading barristers and enlightening the minds of his two companions on various points connected with

the scene before them, with as much zest as an old play-goer might experience in dilating to a rustic neophyte on the various excellencies of his favourites, and explaining the uses of the green-room or the significance of the drop curtain.

He was a kind man and a good one, but a lawyer from sole to crown, and already this brief glimpse of the world to which he rightly belonged, was making him long to return to his office, and again put on the harness which for the first time for twenty years he had thrown off for so long a period as three weeks. He felt, as Hannibal might have done when waking from his inglorious rest at Capua, ashamed of himself for having so long yielded to inglorious ease, and wondering at his own weakness in not resisting the temptation. True there *had* been a little business as some excuse, but so very little that nothing but a client so charming

14

as the young lady by his side could have induced him to consider that as any reason for staying from town so long as he had done.

“I’ll go back the day after to-morrow,” soliloquized Mr. Hesketh; “there’s that affair of *Roe v. Dodd* wants looking to, and it’s time instructions were laid before counsel about it: I think I’ll send them to Shelly: and everything will be getting out of gear if I stay here much longer. I shall have the clerks taking things as easily as if they were in a government office instead of an attorney’s, if I am not back to look after them. Here’s C——, my dear,” he said aloud, as the judge entered; “I wish you to look at *him*. That will be something to remember and to tell your grandchildren of when your time comes to have a dozen or so of them round you.”

There could be no greater man than a great

lawyer in Mr. Hesketh's eyes. If Shakespeare himself could have visited the earth again, he would have been as nothing by the side of a Lord Chancellor. He drew a breath of satisfaction: the curtain was drawing up, the play was going to begin, and he glanced round the court with keen eyes full of zest for their accustomed enjoyment. Eyes that took in everything, that set down the boyish young barrister—who felt as if every one in the court knew he had his wig on for the first time—at his proper value, that estimated the pert young solicitor, full of his own importance, a little more justly than he did himself, that glanced with something of good-humoured contempt at the jury taking their places in the box, and then turned with a little of expectant curiosity to the prisoner when at last he made his appearance in the dock. The eyes betrayed some disappointment

when they saw him. "A fellow like that will make no play, give in at the first word, or throw himself on the mercy of the court," thought Mr. Hesketh, with a little vexation.

It was only a trifling case this first, breaking into a larder and stealing its contents, along with a few articles of wearing apparel from the adjacent laundry; but still the culprit, who was to be for a brief while the centre of the show, should have shown himself a little more worthy of the position. But he looked so utterly an abject, so stolidly, helplessly ignorant of the real nature of his offence, so dazed, so stunned, and bewildered by all the machinery brought to bear upon him, that the good-natured if somewhat cynical lawyer thought, "Why didn't they try to humanize the brute before they put him here? One of the beasts that he drives in his

team would be about as responsible for its actions. If possible he's even lower in intelligence than the jury who are to try him."

Indeed, so low in the scale of humanity did the heavy, slouching, shock-headed creature in the dock appear, that if it had not been for the stolidness of the jury, who appeared to have been, for some wise purpose, selected, as is not unusual in country towns, from the lowest intellectual strata in St. Ewald's, one might have hesitated to class him amongst the genus man at all. They seemed a connecting link between him and the higher order of intelligences on the bench and at the table; only a link very much nearer the lower than the upper end of the chain. But seeing that they were supposed capable of understanding the nature of an oath, and were expected to "well and truly try" the guilt or inno-

cence of the wretched thing before them, it did not appear so altogether incredible that he might have sufficient understanding at least to know why he stood there, and to receive the punishment awarded him as a natural sequence of his offence.

Letitia Lisdale's eyes turned with a vague wonder from the finely moulded face of the judge, where every line spoke of years of thought and culture; from the barristers below, who looked sensible men in spite of their wigs, to the ragged, wretched ignorance in the dock, and the sleek, well satisfied ignorance in the jury box.

"They don't look as if they were all of the same kind," she whispered to Mr. Hesketh, who complacently replied—

"It's the training that does it—the legal training, my dear; there's nothing like it for bringing out whatever there is in a man, and making the best of it; though I

doubt—I very much doubt,” he added, glancing first at the jury and then at the prisoner, “whether Coke or Blackstone themselves could have made anything of the twelve dunderheads over there, or the miserable brute just before us.”

Then the jury were sworn; and while this ceremony, not a particularly edifying one, was taking place, a gentleman entered the court, for whom, crowded as it was, room was found at once by an official. A tall wiry man with high broad shoulders and a slight stoop, as a man well might have who was for ever borne down by the weight of his own learning, and the consciousness of his own greatness. A high narrow forehead, with dark thin hair, inclining to be grey at the temples. A long pointed nose. A large thin-lipped mouth, and cold grey eyes, overshadowed by long straight eyebrows that almost met, darker

than the hair, and so unusually thick as to be the first feature that struck you when you looked at him. A man to whom a beggar would never appeal, and from whom a child or a dog would turn away instinctively. Carefully dressed in a costume that savoured slightly of the clerical—this was the Rev. Cyrill Langton, M.A., D.D., Fellow of St. James', Camford, and Master of the Grammar School of St. Ewald's.

And as it was a very good thing to be Head Master of St. Ewald's, (the neighbouring gentry always managing that one of their own order should hold the post,) as the work was light, the emoluments heavy, and the position considered a very dignified one, it is no wonder that the ushers made room for Dr. Langton, although not two minutes before they had declared that there was not room for another person in the court.

They found room for *him*, crowding other people still more closely together, and the slight stir this made caused Mr. Hesketh's eyes and those of his companions to be turned in his direction, and then Letitia, in a whisper, told Mr. Hesketh who the new comer was, adding: "Next term, Bertie and Launce are to be his pupils."

"Poor fellows!" said Mr. Hesketh, so significantly that Letitia Lisdale glanced at the mother of the young gentlemen of whom she had spoken, in the hope that she had not overheard him, and then a clear sonorous voice broke in, "Prisoner at the bar, how say you, guilty or not guilty?"

Then the judge looked keenly at the prisoner. It was one extreme of humanity regarding another. Could you call *both* these men? Could the loftier intelligence with its lifetime of culture and training, its keen intuitions, its quick perceptions, with

all its natural powers perfected and polished to the utmost, comprehend the stolid helpless slouching thing before it, one whit more than that could enter into the worlds of skill, and thought, and knowledge, which lay around the daily path of the other's life ?

If one was only a man,—only a fair average type of what generations of culture can bring our poor humanity into; what then was the other ? and whose was the sin that the difference between these two souls should be so immeasurable ?

“Guilty or not guilty ?” Dr. Langton turned as the words were spoken and looked at the prisoner as he might at some caged animal brought there to be stared at. Curiously, too, as if wondering how anything so ignorant could be. A creature to whom even the Doctor could not have taught his accidence ; who, it was possible,

did not even know the letters of his own language, and for whom Alpha and Beta might as well never have existed at all. A thing even more incomprehensible to the Doctor than to the judge, in whom all his learning had not overlaid the kindlier instincts. Instincts of which the Doctor was as utterly ignorant as the poor wretch at whom he looked was of all but those he held in common with the brute.

“Guilty or not guilty?” Did the prisoner understand the words? He looked round him as if trying to comprehend their purport; then, as if repeating a lesson he had learned—perhaps some friend had dinned it into him, as his best policy—said huskily, “Guilty.” The case was clear against him, it would have been impossible to disbelieve his guilt, so that if any one had taken the trouble to advise him, they could not have done so more wisely; and having

said the word, he sank down at the bidding of the jailors with a cowed, timid obedience that was pitiful to see, it was so utterly abject, so wofully feeble, and he a strong man of five-and-twenty, and in another instant had disappeared from the sight of the beholders, and was being led back to his prison to await the hearing his sentence, when it should be the judge's pleasure to deliver it.

Letitia Lisdale looked at the dark-browed shaggy creature with eyes full of half-indignant pity. He was so helpless in his ignorance,—no matter for the crime, had he ever had a chance of knowing better?—and now were not judge and jury, all the might and majesty of the law, arrayed against him? It was like rolling out the car of Juggernaut to crush some poor reptile that had ventured from its noisome den.

Tender, pitiful, womanly eyes, out of which the soul looked, that took its first glance at a page of human misery, deeper and sadder than in all its happy youth it had ever dreamed of till now. Eyes that, looking thus, gave a deeper, richer beauty to the face than all its changeful girlish smiles would ever have endowed it with. Eyes that made a looker-on, who caught the glance, almost envy the wretched being who unconsciously had called it up. Such were Letitia Lisdale's eyes as they rested on the prisoner shrinking out of sight from the dock, and such were the eyes that caught the Rev. Charles Rosslyn's as they were carelessly looking round the court.

He had come in there, much as he might have gone into the open doors of a theatre, if he had had an hour and a half-crown to spare, both of which chances were rather

unusual ones in the life of the Rev. Charles, and glancing round, had taken in the group near the judge, along with all the other spectators of and accessories to the scene, had set Letitia down, in her pretty dress and fresh bloom, as an uncommonly nice girl, and wished he had the luck to know her.

And now this one look, with all its pitying unspoken tenderness, had reached something in his careless nature, which he himself had never dreamed lay there till now. He thought, as he looked on her, that if he did know her, it would be to find in her something deeper, higher, nobler than he had ever yet met with in any woman. Whether it would be wise or well for him to know this one he did not stop to ask—Mr. Rosslyn seldom erred on the side of prudence—but he resolved that if by any means it could be

brought to pass, it should not be very long before he and the owner of those pitiful eyes were at least on speaking terms.

CHAPTER II.

THE HORTONS AND THEIR WARD.

AN hour afterwards Miss Lisdale, quite unconscious of the mischief she had wrought, left the court with Mrs. Horton and Mr. Hesketh, and returned with them at a leisurely pace to Fairleigh House, Mr. Horton's present residence. It was a little distance from the town, and yet, once within its gates, you appeared to be in the very heart of the country. It was a long, low, red brick building, lying back some distance from the high road, between which and it a large lawn, dotted here and there with trees, in-

tervened. Between the hedge that skirted the lawn and the road lay a large pond, one of the greatest attractions of the place in the eyes of the junior Hortons, as it gave fair promise of convenient opportunities for skating and sliding in the winter. A large kitchen garden and orchard were at the rear of the house, and from the upper windows in front you saw not only the passing traffic of the high road, but the fields on the other side, stretching far away into the blue distance, with sheep and cattle browsing on the herbage, while here and there stood a haystack, and afar off might be seen the red gables of a substantial farm-house. The view altogether was infinitely prettier, as well as livelier, than any that could have been obtained in the town itself, with its cold, clean white streets, and its faint mockery of life and stir. The quietness of St. Ewald's had been one great

recommendation to Mr. Horton when he had made choice of a residence in it, and the old abbey ruins, of which the town was justly proud, had helped to confirm his decision. The air was soft, and the grammar-school dated from the time of Henry the Eighth, having been built on part of the ground which the abbey had formerly occupied, and endowed with some of its spoils. Mr. Horton hoped to amuse his leisure by studying the local antiquities, and the very age of the school was an additional recommendation in his eyes.

Mrs. Horton would have been glad to settle anywhere. Her life since her marriage had been a nomadic one, Mr. Horton having been persistent in his search for health in every part of the kingdom. He had married late in life, just when every one of his friends had set him down as a confirmed bachelor, having had a legacy un-

expectedly left him, which, with the savings he had made as an accountant in the City, placed him in a position to indulge in what he had till then considered as a luxury, too expensive for his limited means.

Mrs. Horton was at that time a pretty girl of twenty-four, an orphan, and unprovided for, just fifteen years his junior, and with no other prospect, as Mr. Horton very well knew, if she did not marry, than to remain a governess to the end of her days. She was very grateful to him when he made her an offer; so grateful, that she took it as a matter of course that she must be in love with him, and after a very brief and rather prosaic courtship, they were married. Then Mr. Horton, having plenty of time on his hands, had leisure to find himself an invalid, and study at his ease those transient touches of dyspepsia and tic-douloureux which had occasionally troubled him in his

little dark rooms in the City. After two or three years he broke up the pretty little home at Brompton, and wandered restlessly to every watering place on the Continent, and then to every one in the three British islands. He was always ailing; the more he thought about his health the worse it grew, till at last having had his attention directed to the study of geology, and afterwards having thought fit to become something of an antiquarian, he began to think less of his nerves and his symptoms, and to consider that if only to prevent the injury to his collection, and save the trouble of moving it from place to place, to say nothing of being near a good school for the boys, it would be as well to have a permanent home at last.

For in the sixteen years since his marriage, four boys at different intervals had come around him. Not altogether, at first,

to Mr. Horton's satisfaction (children as a possible ingredient in the matrimonial chalice had not entered into his calculations), but he grew to be a very fair father before very long, although every boy as he developed a fresh phase of the boyish character was another puzzle to him—they were altogether inexplicable creatures; much more puzzling when they emerged from the era of socks and petticoats and dimpled chubbiness into the age of knickerbockers and jackets, than even when they first made their appearance. But as they grew older, so each successive urchin seemed, according to the troubled father, to think the end and aim of his being was only to do as much mischief, break as many windows, and make as much noise as possible, Mr. Horton's perplexities increased. He had always been a quiet boy, and it was so long since he had been a boy at all, that

he could not understand the genus of which four sturdy specimens were now around him. They were to be clothed—well, their mother could take that off his hands ; educated—Mrs. Horton for the last three years had sent the two elder to the Great North Middlesex Collegiate, and provided a nursery governess for the two juniors—kept in pocket-money, for which they never seemed to find any use but to purchase whistles, and pop-guns, and gunpowder for miniature cannons, which they were always firing off at inopportune times and places. But as the boys had grown and the collection increased, it was a good thing certainly to have roomy quarters for the former, and a permanent abiding place for the latter ; and Fairleigh House, with its ample accommodation and large gardens and paddock, its proximity to a good-sized town, and its easy distance (but two hours

by rail) from London, the head quarters of the Antiquarian and Geological Societies, of both of which he was now a fellow, seemed the very home for himself and his family to settle down in after their manifold wanderings.

The relief it was to Mrs. Horton to have a permanent home was indescribable. For nearly thirteen years she had been dwelling in lodgings, furnished houses, and hotels; she, a woman who, out of chairs and tables, linen presses and choice closets, could make her household gods, and care for them with the kindest reverence. To have "things of her own," as she phrased it, and not other people's, about her, was an inexpressible comfort; but to have no trouble about finding accommodation for the elder boys when home for their holidays, not to have the continual fear before her eyes of landladies complaining of carpets damaged by

the younger ones, or fellow-lodgers sending in remonstrances as to their noise, was a greater still. But the crowning delight was the nearness of the grammar school. Launce and Bertie could go there every day. She should have all her four treasures constantly round her, have no anxieties lest one should eat too little, or another too much, that at any time, when perhaps three hundred miles away, and Mr. Horton rather worse than usual, she should learn that Launce had a sore throat, or Bertie an attack of the measles. She had had such trials, and infinite credit is due to the forbearance and sweetness of her temper for taking them as uncomplainingly as she had done.

Well, she should have her reward now—the very home she could have wished for her boys, and, as an additional drop of sweetness in her cup, a ready-made daughter,

sweet, good, and loveable, to give it a crowning grace.

Seven years ago, Letitia Lisdale had been consigned to the joint guardianship of Messrs. Hesketh and Horton. It was impossible for the former, a bachelor, with only a housekeeper to superintend his domestic arrangements, to receive her into his house; equally impossible, Mr. Horton said, with his uncertain movements, to take her into his, as in fact he had none at the time to take her into. He threw the whole responsibility of the matter upon Mr. Hesketh, who, looking round amongst his clients and acquaintances, found before long a single lady of reduced means and good family, who, for a certain addition to her slender income, would consent to take charge of his ward.

Miss Stewart lived in one of the oldest houses of the Close of an old cathedral

town. Letitia Lisdale grew up to womanhood, with the shadow of a petrified religion for ever before her. It was a still, quiet life, but it suited her ; she was of a nature to appreciate all the refinement and devotional element that pervaded it, and see nothing of the inevitable alloy, the admixture of small aims, petty ambitions and jealousies that taint the atmosphere of such a place,—imps of evil, which even the ringing of the consecrated bells is powerless to scare away. She had good masters, and her more solid studies Miss Stewart herself directed, at least as successfully as they would have been guided in any ladies' college. She was a well-read woman, if with no particular grasp of intellect, and, what is a much rarer thing than that which we now-a-days define as a lady, a thorough gentlewoman. Slightly precise, a little conventional, as a country-town gentlewoman is

apt to be ; with a few little formalities, for which Mr. Hesketh, looking at her as the temporary guardian of a budding heiress, liked her all the better, and, being human, necessarily her few foibles ; but a woman who trod her daily path carefully and conscientiously, with one rule of life to guide her, one great exemplar for her imitation ; gentle, tender, precise, neat and staid ; just, pitying, merciful,—Mr. Hesketh might easily have found a more fashionable *gouvernante* for Miss Lisdale, he could not possibly have found one better fitted in every other respect for the guardianship of a young, tender, sensitive girl.

Miss Stewart had the *entrée* of the best society in the city. The circle was very limited, and to any one fresh from London coteries might have had other drawbacks than its smallness. It was certainly narrow-minded, not particularly clever, and

the rules and formulas of its etiquette were something fearful to a new-comer. It was behindhand with its reading and its fashions ; it was inflexible in its orthodoxy, and unbending in its disdain of trade and commerce. It looked upon artists—whether they designed their creations with pen or with pencil—with timidity and a lurking doubt that socially they were little better than the poor players, whom their ancestors of two generations back had designated vagabonds ; and of anything that savoured in the least of Bohemianism, it had as much horror as in other days it might have had of the plague ; but still it was formed of gentlemen and ladies, and its tone was pure and refined, and, in 'Miss Stewart's presence at least, gentle and kindly. Little meanesses, small dissensions and jealousies fled before her, so that altogether, whatever it might have been under other auspices, the

Close of the old city proved no bad training-school for Letitia Lisdale.

The worst that it could possibly be said to have done, was to make her a little quieter and more staid than other girls, perhaps too considerate of forms and appearances ; more so, surely, than so pure a soul need have been ; but she would have been quiet under any circumstances—if the shadow of the cathedral had never fallen daily across her path—if she had never breathed the still decorous air of the Close—only under other auspices her quietness might have been less refined and stately than it was now, and her face not have worn the look that it did so often—as if the cathedral chants and songs had entered into her soul, and left their beauty visible in her face.

A little time before the opening of this story, Miss Stewart had been called away

to a deeper stillness than that of the cathedral close, and as the Hortons had just taken possession of Fairleigh House, it seemed the most natural thing possible for Letitia Lisdale to remain with them till she attained her majority. Mrs. Horton rejoiced greatly. This was, as she expressed it, a ready-made daughter for her. She was very fond of her boys, but had sometimes wished that Providence had blessed her with a daughter in addition. Now here was a daughter to her hand. She exulted in this new acquisition with a joy which her husband was far from sharing.

The boys were bad enough, but a young lady, as he pictured Letitia before he saw her, lively, fashionable, fond of croquet and cartes, would be fearful. The house would never be their own for the constant influx of visitors that she would bring. Then

there would come wooing, wedding, and all their attendant disagreeables ; things, the prospect of which seemed only to fill Mrs. Horton with redoubled satisfaction. But, by this time, his married life had taught him that in all practical matters it was infinitely better to defer to his wife's judgment, and, whenever it was possible, to throw the onus of any responsibility upon her shoulders. He did so now. Miss Lisdale entered her guardian's family with the understanding between himself and his wife, perfectly comprehended, if tacit, that he washed his hands of her altogether : she was Mrs. Horton's charge—just as the boys, the servants, and everything else, animate or inanimate, that constituted a part of the domestic economy. Then Mr. Horton felt himself at liberty to pursue his studies, antiquarian and archæological, botanical and geological, with an untroubled mind both as

regarded his ward and himself. He had done his duty by her ; that is to say, he had consigned her to the care of Mrs. Horton, who would do that duty both for him and herself.

She fully intended doing so, to the very best of her power, but then her views of duty, as regarded Miss Lisdale, were rather peculiar. Of course she spoiled her ; but then she spoiled every one with whom she came in contact. But over and above this spoiling she considered it incumbent on her to find a husband to spoil the young lady also. One chief source of her regret at having no daughter of her own, was, that there would be no call for her to exert those powers of match-making which she felt humbly confident she possessed. She had exercised them when a girl in behalf of cousins and sisters, quite ignoring her own interests ; nay at the precise moment

Mr. Horton proposed, she had been deliberating which of her female acquaintance he would be likely to select, and had been as much astonished as gratified at finding that, without any exertions at all on her own part, it was her own match that was to be made this time. There were the boys, certainly: but boys were not so manageable by their own mother—other people's mothers would provide them with wives. It was a blessing beyond description to have a girl like Letitia, sweet, fresh, and pretty, and with a nice little fortune to compensate for any possible deficiencies on the suitor's part, in her hands, the crowning joy to the new life of settled peace and household routine to which she was looking forward. Marry her, of course she would, and before Mrs. Horton had been three months in St. Ewald's, she had taken stock, as it were, of every unmarried gentle-

man in the town, from the mayor, rich, portly, fifty-three, and a widower, to the assistant masters of the grammar school; young, poor, gentlemanly, and for the most part curates without cures, whom the Doctor was glad to have on account of the prestige the Rev. before, and the M.A. after, their names, gave to the school.

They were all down on Mrs. Horton's mental list—a *catalogue raisonnée* in the tablet of her memory; but Letitia, fortunately for her peace of mind, was completely ignorant of the good offices intended her. She was thoroughly happy in her new home, and had not the slightest wish to leave it. Mr. Horton, if a little fretful and very fidgety, was kindness itself; as to Mrs. Horton, the girl felt she could scarcely have loved her own mother better; and, as to the boys, she had warmed to them as if they had been her brothers. It was a great

change, this household, with the fresh if somewhat boisterous life the boys infused into it, from the decorous stillness of that quiet home in the cathedral close. But she was young enough and fresh enough to enjoy it to the full, and girlish enough, in spite of the sweet stateliness which hung about her, to enter into their freaks and fun with a zest which puzzled Mr. Horton and gratified the young gentlemen, who, in confidence, informed each other that they hadn't thought there was so much "go" in her. Indeed the impression she made upon Launce, the elder, was so forcible, that he informed Bertie he wished for Miss Lisdale's sake he was just a little older, in which case he would have done her the honour of "flirting no end with her."

CHAPTER III.

PATERFAMILIAS AND HIS CARES.

LAUNCE and Bertie were in the large outer lawn as Mrs. Horton, Letitia, and Mr. Hesketh returned to the house by the carriage drive which skirted round it. Launce was standing with his hands in his pockets, looking down at Will, the gardener's boy, who had been set to weed the path which divided the two lawns, and was doing so at the rate of one weed in two minutes. Will was sulky. Chubb his superior, with whom Will was the one standing grievance of his life, had not only reproved him with

more acerbity than ever, but had actually proceeded to the ungentlemanly length of pulling Will's ears, and threatening him with a cowhiding. Master Launce had stood by mutely disapproving Chubb's conduct ; but the gardener was not a pleasant person to deal with. He had contrived to impress master, mistress, and the whole household with a belief that if garden and greenhouse were to thrive, it could only be through his, Mr. Chubb's, deigning to take charge of them. Chubb believed in himself immensely—as a matter of course he made every one else believe in him too. Mr. Horton stood more in awe of him than he had ever done of any human being, and was thankful that he had a wife to take Chubb, with all his other cares, off his hands.

Chubb obeyed his mistress pretty well, but on the rare occasions when his master

interfered, made a point of letting him see how impertinent he considered such interference. In the first place he had an idea that, with all Mrs. Horton's sweetness and goodnature, it would not be altogether safe to do otherwise—and Chubb's place was worth retaining—and in the next, he liked a feminine rule, contriving to infuse into his very obedience an ornate politeness and gallantry which implied that his subservience was rendered less to the employer than to the lady. He had a bad temper, and, for his station, a good education—two qualities which, combined in a servant, do not always conduce to the felicity of his master and mistress. He had a profound admiration for Miss Lisdale, and a great dislike for Master Launce, who, however, had found that it was not safe to “cheek Chubb.” He had capped Latin with him once, and been extinguished by the gardener, and had ever

since confined himself to calling flowers by their more received names. Chubb had never in his life been known to give a flower its English designation ; and as to the dear old poetic appellations of which our language is so full, Chubb looked upon them with as profound a contempt as Dr. Langton might have done upon a schoolboy's slang, if ever *his* schoolboys had been rash enough to utter such in his hearing. Even Miss Lisdale's lips could not make daisy, love-lies-bleeding, or sweet william, endurable in his ears.

Launce had had his anger excited this morning by Chubb's maltreatment of Will. He had a strong instinctive sense of justice, or, rather, if any tyranny was to be exercised in this world, he did not like it to be by any one but himself ; and now that Chubb was out of hearing, having gone off to the kitchen garden, Launce proceeded to

enlighten Will as to the nature of the wrongs he had sustained, and the best means of seeking redress. Launce was a slight, handsome, small-featured, fair-haired boy, with delicate hands and feet, and with such a careless, indefinable air of superiority to every one about him, that he had already roused the indignation of his new school-fellows at King Henry's as a cockney swell, who thought himself too good for them, and caused Will to inform Bertie, who was about his own age, and who had fraternized with him from the first, that his brother was proud, much too proud, "to speak to the likes of him."

And Will was very much surprised when Launce spoke now, and Bertie, a thick-set little fellow with curly hair that was never smooth, and a round good-tempered face that was never clean, and with jacket and trousers that had an inveterate habit of

acquiring all the dirt they could, and of wearing themselves persistently into holes at the knees and elbows, and who believed in his big brother (Launce was three years the senior of the two) almost as much as his big brother did in himself, stood by in mute admiration of Launce's eloquence; an admiration fully shared by the group behind the hedge, who were listening unperceived.

"I don't see, Will, that Chubb has any right to lick you," Master Launce began.

"No more he hasn't," said Will, stopping, with the fingers of one hand round a blade of grass, and applying the knuckles of the other to his eyes.

"He isn't your master," Launce continued; "and if he were, he wouldn't have any business to pitch into you."

"Course he wouldn't," said Will.

"This is a free country, you know, Will;

you're not a bond slave, and he's not an overseer."

"No, nor a beadle neither," said Will; "there's only one in the parish."

"I was speaking of a plantation. But perhaps you don't know what that means."

"Yes I do," said Will, brightening up, "an' so does father—there's lots o' game in them; leastways," he added, cunningly, "for those that knows how to catch it."

"Ah! well, that's not the kind of plantation I meant. Don't you go poaching, Will, or you'll get yourself into no end of a mess. But now with regard to Chubb—he has no right to lick you, that's a fact, isn't it?"

Will nodded.

"And in self-defence you've a right to lick him—if you can. That's another fact, eh?"

Will nodded this time more dubiously.

"Well, the next time he tackles you, pitch into him again—just run a-muck with

your head in the pit of his stomach. I shouldn't say Chubb's wind's good for much, he's too short and stout. Shouldn't wonder but you'll send him backwards. Anyhow, give him a banger while you're about it, then cut; Chubb can't run, you know—I should like to see him; and if he begins jawing or licking you again, tell him you'll give him some more of the same sort. That'll bring him to his senses, and you're quite in the right, you know, that's the best of it. As I said before, this is a free country, and no one's any business to be put upon unlawfully."

Then Master Launce walked away with his hands in his pockets towards the house, feeling that he had done the best thing possible for Will, and Mr. Hesketh, as he walked towards the house with the ladies, observed—

"That's a boy that I should like to have

the training of, ma'am. There's stuff—there's stuff there that a course of study in an attorney's office or a counsel's chambers might develop splendidly. What a pity Will couldn't afford to give him a fee for his advice! I shall make a point of tipping Launce myself for it."

Mr. Horton was in his study looking, as he generally did in the absence of his wife, very querulous, intensely helpless, and miserable. The boys, all four, had been more unruly even than usual in her absence, the two younger ones having point-blank refused to mind their nurse, who had, in despair, appealed to her master to prevent Master Jack shutting his younger brother in the greenhouse and making faces at him through the door. The two rebels were now each in a corner of the study, Jack, who was eight years old, and of a poetical turn of mind, solacing himself with an

illustrated edition of the "Lady of the Lake," purloined from the dining-room table; Arnie, who was scarcely seven, and of a more adventurous turn, indulging himself with Parkyns's "Abyssinia." They were precocious children, both, having been so much with their parents, and the younger had nearly as decided a turn for argument as Launce. Jack was decidedly quieter; he made grimaces of remonstrance, and winked fearfully in approval. Both were spoiled, but Jack, who was small, wiry, and old-fashioned, came in for a much smaller share of undue indulgence than did Arnie, a round, rosy, curly-haired rebel, whom every woman made a point of falling in love with directly she saw him. And, considering the manner in which they had been brought up by a mother whose first anxiety was that her children should be happy for their own sakes, and her next

that they should be quiet for their father's, and, considering too the constant source of perplexity and wonder they were to that father, first, as to the very peculiar nature of boys in general, and next as to the best means of managing his boys in particular ; why, I can only say that Jack and Arnie, if rather odd children, were, on the whole, very much better than might have been expected.

According to old-fashioned theories at any rate—but after all, is not sunshine the very best thing that any young creature can have to thrive in, even if that sunshine is a little erratic in its course, or too lavish in its warmth and light ?

Mr. Horton was full of the trouble the boys had been. It was a satisfaction to have his wife back to hear them. He did not at all grudge her whatever amusement her visit to the court-house might have

afforded her, but he liked her to know what it had cost him. Bertie had been on the tiles of the stables, and had broken a window with one of his arrows ; and as to the two younger ones, there they were, visible delinquents, and even while recounting their sins they had been mutually exciting each other's wrath—having become a little tired of their books by this time—by pelting each other with a small collection of pebbles and chips which they had appropriated from a drawer in their father's study, and at last had rushed together, when a yell and a scramble, and a simultaneous roll on the carpet announced that the onslaught had begun.

“The little wretches !” exclaimed their father. “Is it in the nature of boys from their tenderest years,” he added, turning to Mr. Hesketh, “to fight persistently with or without just cause? Of all the

unaccountable, senseless propensities next to their inveterate love of mischief——. There they are again!" And Mr. Horton sat down in mute helplessness, while his wife and Letty parted the combatants.

Jack was discomfited, and felt it, but he disdained to show any other sign of defeat than scowling awfully at every one in the room. Arnie beamed with delight, and looked radiant as the conqueror, till his mother's reproof brought on a change of countenance, and he flung himself sulkily on the rug.

"Jack hit me first, or I shouldn't have hit him."

"But you sad little Cain, you shouldn't hit back."

"Don't see why I shouldn't, if Jack begins."

"But you're not to copy Jack. Now, do you think if Jesus had had a little brother

he would have struck back again?" said Mrs. Horton, persuasively.

"Don't see why I should copy Jesus more than Jack," said Master Arnie sullenly. "If Jack hits me, don't see why I'm not to hit back again."

Then Arnie was borne off, to be lectured by Letitia in her own chamber, after more serious purpose than I choose to set down here, and Jack went away with his mother, leaving Mr. Horton to dilate in peace to Mr. Hesketh upon the inexplicable nature of boys, and the peculiar depravity of the four belonging especially to him.

"They're not much worse than other people's," said Mr. Hesketh, "not very much, considering they do tell the truth—Master Arnie in particular, and a boy may do worse things than break windows or climb roofs. Arnie certainly will never be a 'Morning Dew-drop,' or a 'Gathered

Blossom,' but I think, if you leave him to the teachings of those two ladies who had the sense not to be shocked by that rather astounding piece of irreverence of his, he'll do. Jack's a brave little fellow, and knows better than to cry out when he's hurt ; for Launce I've a profound esteem ; something has occurred to-day which has raised him immensely in my estimation ; and as to Bertie, he's just one of those dunderheads who blunder their way through the world better than many a cleverer fellow. On the whole," said Mr. Hesketh complacently, for he had praised his friend's boys till he was in good humour with them himself, "I don't know that if I were to be blessed with sons, which unhappily at this time of day is out of the question, I should wish for finer specimens than yours."

"I wish you had them, with all my

heart," said their father, looking ruefully round his disordered study. To which Mr. Hesketh, following the look, could not find it in his heart to say Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REV. CHARLES ROSSLYN AT HOME.

IN one of the least dreary of the cold white genteel streets of St. Ewald's, the Rev. Charles Rosslyn had his lodgings. They were near the grammar school of which he was one of the assistant masters, and that was a recommendation, and they were cheap, which was another. The rooms were quiet, too, and there was a little garden in front, only large enough to hold a dozen geraniums and a rose or two, but even that was something to one born and bred in the country, and the landlady was

fairly honest and obliging. It was not quite the home to which the Rev. Charles had looked forward when he first went to college ; but things had gone differently with him to what he had anticipated, and it was the best his salary allowed him to indulge in.

I must try to bring the Rev. Charles before you. We shall have something to do with him in these pages, and I want you to think of him as something more than a mere usher, and to like him before we have done with him, notwithstanding a few faults and some weaknesses.

He had a good-looking face, handsome, manly, and clever, with clear, frank grey eyes, light waving hair, a pleasant mouth, a broad open forehead, and a complexion just sufficiently bronzed and florid to show that, although a clergyman and a master of King Henry's School, he was in the habit of

taking a fair share of out-door exercise. It was a good face and a kind one—you liked the man the moment you saw him—and yet it was not altogether reliable ; not that you could feel any doubt as to his sincerity ; you felt sure that you had to do with one clear and true as daylight, but still there was at times a weakness and an irresolution in it when it was at rest ; and, in the varying expression of the eyes, the changeful shadows of the face, you read that you had to do with a man apt to be swayed by the last impulse of the moment, and who had done in his time, and might yet do again, many a foolish thing in his haste, by which he would verify the proverb, and repent of it at his leisure.

Foolish things possibly ; but at any rate never false, cruel, or unmanly ones.

His room was decidedly untidy, and showed none of the lady-like tastes which

are sometimes perceptible in the apartments of young clergymen. There was no piano at which to practise sacred music for the elder ladies, or sentimental songs for younger ones. There was neither fernery nor aquarium, and the books ranged on the shelves in a recess by the fireplace were scarcely of the character which young clerics, as a rule, are supposed to delight in.

There were a great many books, mostly cheap editions of Scott's, Marryat's, and Cooper's novels; piles of unbound magazines and periodicals, amongst which, however, neither the *Literary Churchman* nor the *Guardian* was to be found; Tennyson and Browning in rather shabby condition—they had been picked up, bargains, second hand; "Izaak Walton," an "Angler's Guide," and "The Handbook of Cricket." Sermons there were none, of classics there were few, and Doctor Langton's "Ovid,"

a presentation copy from the author two years ago, was on the uppermost shelf still uncut.

There was a fowling-piece over the fireplace, and a fishing rod, a cricket bat—Lillywhite's—in the corner, and on a shelf lay a pair of boxing gloves, and some foils. There were some things, at any rate, on which this graceless young divine thought fit to spend his money, however he might economise in others.

He had finished his supper, and to judge by the look of the table it had not been a very luxurious one, and he was leaning back now, smoking a cigar of rather inferior quality; but, then, if out of a hundred a year people *will* be customers to Lillywhite, &c., they can't have very choice cigars; besides, what business has a clergyman to smoke at all? and he was reading the *Cornhill*. His slippers were down at

heel, his coat was an old shooting jacket, his neck was bare, and his hair untidy ; altogether he presented as careless and unclerical a figure as any young Reverend could very well do.

It was a still, sultry evening, and Mr. Rosslyn was sitting by the open window of his room ; the street was very quiet, the inhabitants being mostly childless couples, or old maids, and St. Ewald's was mercifully exempt from the infliction of street organs. It was nearly twelve, so that most probably every inhabitant of St. Mary's Terrace was asleep, with the exception of Mr. Rosslyn, who had been rowing on the river till a late hour, and having partaken of the very simple refreshment which his landlady had placed ready for him before she retired to rest, and then having opened his window, sat down by it to indulge in his cigar, which

was, however, not much more in accordance with his tastes than his supper had been.

Once upon a time,—not so very long ago either,—Charles Rosslyn would have looked upon it as an absurd impossibility that he could have supped off bread and cheese and radishes, and hesitated before indulging in the luxury of a second cigar. He had been the *enfant gâté* of an old maiden great-aunt, whose dearest wish was to see him in the Church. His natural fitness or unfitness for the avocation did not trouble the good lady.

She sent him to college, with a very liberal allowance; and Charles Rosslyn being, perhaps, not very much better than the average of young men, and with an immense amount of animal spirits to lead him astray, and of animal strength which required a wider field for its exercise than

that afforded in his rooms, or by a stroll in the college grounds, got into two or three little scrapes, which rather startled his aunt.

They were not very flagrant, however—nothing that in after years a man might not laugh over to his wife, even if he might think it wisest not to mention them to his boys, but they were scarcely in keeping with the character of a candidate for holy orders, and they were not likely to sound pleasantly in the ears of a maiden lady of unimpeachable propriety.

However, Charles Rosslyn's offences were forgiven on the one condition that he would still do his best to carry out his aunt's wishes, and enter the Church. He was beginning by this time to doubt his own fitness for it, but the lady would hear of no change. She was one of those quiet,

placid-seeming women, whose wills are inexorable.

Charles Rosslyn was utterly dependent on her—he remembered nothing of his parents, and his only other relative, an uncle by the father's side, having a child of his own to provide for, appeared to consider that in giving him an occasional invitation to his house, he had fulfilled all that consanguinity required of him—there was no one but the old maid with her Low Church predilections, and her determination to see her nephew in the pulpit, for him to look to, and so at last Charles Rosslyn did as his aunt wished him, and having been duly ordained, entered on a curacy in one of the poorest and most populous parishes of London.

And then he found out his mistake. He could read well, and render the church prayers with excellent emphasis and feeling ;

not wholly simulated either. Those college pranks of his had not been so very bad. The young fellow who committed them need not have been wholly irreligious, and he had sufficient talent and sufficient devotional feeling, when in the right mood, to write a very fair sermon, not perhaps quite in accordance with the Evangelical tenets in which his aunt's soul delighted, but still a sermon that would pass muster well enough in these days of latitudinarianism.

But this was all. When he came face to face with the grim, gaunt realities of death and poverty, and sin, whose stolid ignorance was its one redeeming point, he felt himself dumb and helpless. What had he, with his easy careless life, to do with those perishing creatures, every hour of whose miserable existence had perhaps taught them more of woeful experience than

all the years that he had lived had shown him ?

What should he say to these, whose lot had been so hard in this world, of another, when his own faith quailed and wavered at the very sight of the misery which year after year it had been given them to endure ? The need—the helpless, hopeless need—of our great cities, the illimitable suffering, wide and boundless as the ocean, the sins of darkened souls, which it seemed the sheerest mockery to reprove, were the social problems before which he quailed. He could not answer them, and his was not the childlike, trusting faith, content with just enough light to show its feet how to take one step before another ; its hands how to work the task appointed for each day. A stronger and a better, or a weaker and a simpler man ; either of these might have been equal to the duty before which he

shrank appalled, feeling that if he persisted in it, the end would be either atheism or madness.

He did the most honest thing he had ever done in his life—gave up his cure, and asked his aunt to help him earn his bread in some other manner. She never forgave him ; and being carried off a month after by an attack of apoplexy, it was found that her will, dated the day after her nephew had acquainted her with his intended change of life, bequeathed the whole of her property to the Society for the Conversion of the Jews.

Dr. Langton had been on visiting terms at the late Miss Rosslyn's. He was down in her will for a mourning ring, or at least for fifty guineas to buy one ; he took the money, but never bought the ring. But he did what some people said was much better—told Charles Rosslyn with as much gracious-

ness as he knew how to assume—and graciousness was a garment that sat ill upon the Doctor—that he would help him. He was the last man from whom such a thing might have been looked for ; the very last to whom a young beginner in the road of life, or a wayfarer beaten down in the struggle, would have turned for aid or sympathy. Sympathy, indeed, he did *not* give ; it was not in him ; but the solid help that lay in his power he proffered, in the shape of a mastership in King Henry's School, and it was readily accepted.

Mr. Charles Rosslyn did not altogether dislike the work. At any rate it was infinitely better than toiling Sisyphus-like in his curacy at Mile Green. He could do some little good here, being a fair mathematician and a tolerable classical scholar. He did not like Dr. Langton ; the Doctor had helped him, and he was grateful for it, but the

natures of the two were essentially antagonistic, and the standing wonder of Charles Rosslyn's life was, that Dr. Langton, who so rarely helped any, should have assisted him.

The Doctor knew something of his family, which, perhaps, might partly account for it; had been at college with his father, so Mr. Rosslyn had once heard his aunt say. The Doctor himself never alluded in any way to his college days, and of the elder Mr. Rosslyn's early life the late Miss Rosslyn had maintained so decorous a silence that her nephew could only come to the conclusion that he must have been almost as graceless as himself.

The Doctor did not interfere with him. There was the regular school routine, but it was not very burthensome; the hours were easy and the vacations long. He would have liked Mr. Charles Rosslyn to wear a white neck-cloth instead of

a black tie, and the fumes of the cigars in which the latter delighted were odious to the Doctor's nostrils. He could not understand his partiality for boating and cricketing, but he shut his eyes to all these eccentricities, and so far Mr. Rosslyn had nothing to complain of. Neither was his salary an illiberal one.

Dr. Langton was a careful man, who knew the value of money; but he paid, if not the highest, still a fair market price for such attainments as Mr. Rosslyn possessed. If they had been worth more to him he would have given more, but considering the small number of pupils, and the very secondary importance of the school, it was not likely that the post of second assistant-master would be very lucrative. The first assistant-master was a much older man, married, and allowed to take boarders, which Dr. Langton himself would have dis-

dained to do, even had he had a wife to superintend his household. Of course his emoluments were very much greater than his junior's, but still Mr. Rosslyn felt that he had nothing to complain of. It was his own fault possibly if he did not like the Doctor; at any rate they agreed in one thing, and that was in seeing as little as possible of each other.

The town, if dull and unattractive in itself, was at least near some very charming rural scenery, and if the river was unfitted for business traffic till some distance from St. Ewald's, its shallow waters were all the pleasanter for Charles Rosslyn's boat to sail idly on in summer hours. If society was monotonous and precise, and had little of either intellectual life or earnest business purpose to recommend it, still it showed its best side to him when he cared to mix with it, as a young man of good family and gentle-

manly position ; and so he had been content the last two years to let his life drift away much as his boat might do on a still summer evening on the river, with no more aim or direction on his part than just to while away the time with as little trouble and as much pleasantness as possible. The boat might drift—the life flow on—what matter to any one but himself how idly the summer evening was spent, or with what little purpose the years passed away ?

If it suited him to be content with the position of second master at King Henry's School, and to fill up his life by trying to teach the boys of a country town something of the construction of the Latin language and the solution of problems in mathematics, and to occupy some of his leisure hours by writing magazine articles which were sometimes inserted and paid

for, and sometimes not, who should blame him? If a life with no other aims or purposes than these sufficed for his content, had he not a right to congratulate himself that he was so easily content, and could accept the present state of things, without requiring of the Fates to give him more?

But this evening he was in a frame of mind unusually restless and dissatisfied. Something in the litter of his rooms, the poor furniture, and the mean surroundings struck him unpleasantly; the more unpleasantly, that he knew he could afford no better.

And as he smoked his second cigar, he asked when a time would come that he should be able to take a more luxurious home? Certainly not while he was the second master of King Henry's. And was he to be nothing but the master there

all his life? And all his life was this, or such as this, to be his home?

He flung his cigar, not half smoked, from him. It was a piece of extravagance of which he would not have been guilty had he not been too angry with himself or his ill fortune to take much heed to prudence. Then he paced up and down the little room thinking how out of place there the bright face, the sweet eyes, and the dainty dress he had seen that day in the Court House would be. In this sordid den, as he mentally termed it, it seemed almost a desecration to think of her; but he did think, notwithstanding, and vowed a vow that not many days should pass before he had learned at least the name and dwelling-place of the fair vision, and done his best to gain access to her.

Under all circumstances a very imprudent resolve, but then if Mr. Charles Ross-

lyn had been better governed by prudence in his earlier days, he would not in these have been a tenant of Mrs. Prew's two parlours.

CHAPTER V.

MR. ROSSLYN'S PROTÉGÉ.

THE church clock of St. Jude's, the handsomest and nearly the oldest of the four churches in St. Ewald's, struck eleven. It meant twelve, but the clock was generally an hour and a few minutes wrong, taking things after a pleasant, leisurely fashion, as a clock of consequence might do, leaving its parishioners to study the vagaries it chose to give itself, and arrange their hours accordingly. The second master of King Henry's School ought to have been in bed. He would have to

rise early in the morning to take his place before nine in the school-room, but he felt in no mood for sleep. He went to the window and closed it, however, then stepped into the back parlour, which served as his bed-room, and opening the window there, went out into the tiny garden at the back, where, small as it was, he should at least have more room to pace than in-doors. The night was dark, and the branches of the trees that grew in the great garden of St. Jude's Rectory looked black and heavy in the gloom.

It was the most famous garden in the whole town; its vicinity was a great recommendation in Mrs. Prew's eyes to her lodgings. All the gardens on that side of St. Jude's Terrace abutted on this one. They thought as much of it as the dwellers near one of the public parks in London might of their proximity to it. They took quite an

interest in its crop of fruit, from the first snowy shower of blossoms to the time when the pears and apples hung red, and green, and yellow on the trees. They liked from the upper windows to catch a glimpse of the flower-beds on the lawn near the house, of the players on the croquet ground, whose voices and the sound of whose laughter reached their ears. They took quite an interest in the proceedings of the rector's grandsons when they clambered up the great walnut tree, and pelted each other with the fruit, Thrupp, the gardener, and his master being both out of the way.

They speculated on the amount of damage those young monkeys would do, and they watched with kindlier eyes for the flutter of May Blake's pretty summer dress when, as was the case more than half her time, she was on a visit to her uncle and aunt; and

there was not one of them who did not feel a personal interest in May's possible lover, and wonder who in all the town would be thought worthy of the prettiest and best endowed girl in it.

Occasionally Mr. Rosslyn had seen the young lady in question—in a small provincial town, people standing on something of the same social scale necessarily know each other, at least by sight—and he had idealized her in a very charming little novelette, which was much the best thing he had ever written. But he had never looked on May with anything but the eye of a poet. She was lovely and so were the flowers; she was bright, and so were the skies, and she was glad and joyful in her youth, as a girl so loved and cherished well might be, and he would have liked her portrait in his room, and he caught himself sometimes murmuring over a descrip-

tion of Hebe, with which, as well as the novelette, she had inspired him—"Youngest and fairest daughter of the morn!" But if May had been the Hebe of the old mythologies, his feelings for her could not have been further apart from love than they were.

He had thought himself invulnerable till now—till now that the tender pity of the eyes bent on the miserable wretch in the Court House had made him feel his armour was not wholly proof.

He paced up and down the little garden chafing at this new weakness, when a hasty yet stealthy step on the gravel path of Mr. Blake's garden startled him. It was heavy too—certainly not one of the maids, and too hurried for their master. Could it be the sweetheart of one of the former awaiting a midnight meeting? He smiled as he thought of Mrs. Blake's horror of such a

breach of decorum if ever it came to her knowledge. But in another second the sounds changed, and it was clear the person on the other side of the wall, let him be who he might, meant to come down on his. He was evidently raising himself by the help of some tree, a peach or apricot most likely, and again Charles Rosslyn smiled as he pictured Mr. Blake's indignation had he only known the uses to which one of his cherished trees was put.

He shrank back into a corner, and presently down dropped the figure of a man—he could discern that much even through the darkness—and lay panting and spent, like a hunted animal. He seemed after a while to listen as if to ascertain whether there was any pursuit being made on the other side, and at last, as if satisfied by the stillness that there was none, rose and peered round him, evidently with a

view to discover what chance of escape he had from his present hiding place. The light of the candle which Mr. Rosslyn had left burning on his mantelpiece, attracted him there ; and rising, he might perhaps in another minute have been in the room had not the Rev. Charles stepped forward, and laying a hand on his shoulder, quietly observed :

“ Not quite so fast, my dear sir ; before you invade the privacy of my chamber, have the goodness to tell me whom I have the honour of addressing ?”

The figure shrank away with a hoarse inarticulate cry. Charles Rosslyn led it back to the light, which, uncertain as it was, served to show him the face that he had seen in the Court House that day ; the face upon which the eyes he had just been dreaming of, were bent so pityingly. In that recollection alone the

creature had a claim on him which he was ready to recognize without looking too closely upon certain other claims that the law and the duties of citizenship might impose.

He drew him into the room, shut the window and closed the shutters, then looked at his captive.

A young man of perhaps five-and-twenty, of the middle height and strongly built, with shoulders which had the slouch that tells of hard labour at the plough or spade ; a downcast face, heavy, sullen, with at present no other expression than an animal cunning mingled with a slavish fear, dark, tangled hair, and eyes that seemed unable to meet the light—or, it might be, the glance that was now bent on them.

The one peculiarity of the face was the dark, thick eyebrows—eyebrows that almost met in a line and completed the resemblance

of the face to some animal's—wild dog, or wolf, you could not tell which ; but there was the animalism, coarse, sullen, cruel, in every line and feature, in the low brow, the thick nose, the full shapeless lips ; and those dark beetling brows just completed its resemblance to some nature lower and more fell than man's.

Was it only the peculiarity of the eye-brows, or anything besides in that hard repellent face, which involuntarily recalled another to Charles Rosslyn's mind, and made him half smile at the incongruity of the mindless thing before him resembling Dr. Langton, the greatest scholar perhaps in all the kingdom, in any one particular.

His prisoner's hands were bleeding ; his corduroy trousers torn at the knees. He had most likely had other walls to climb besides those of Mr. Blake's garden. What-

ever desperation had prompted him to make his escape, seemed fast failing him now, as he looked up at Charles Rosslyn—the face, not the eyes—it was just a question whether since their unconscious infancy those eyes had ever sought man's or woman's yet—and said hoarsely :—

“ Ar yow goin' to gi' me up ?”

“ I suppose I ought—jail birds have no business to be let loose. How did you manage to break out ?”

The other looked again. The furtive eyes seemed able to judge with tolerable accuracy of the character of his captor, for he answered in a more reassured tone, evidently with the feeling that his confidence would not be misplaced—

“ They shet me up in a room at the top o' the house. The bars weren't so strong as they thout on, an' I knowd how to twist my sheets. 'Twas a tough job

though, to climb th' outer wall, but I did it. I wor allus a rare one to climb, and so I got away. I thout I'd hide in that there garden, but I went tew nigh th' house, an' so was sin. I heerd a winder open, an' thout I'd better run for't; Squire Blake keep a gun I've heerd say."

"So do I," answered the Rev. Charles, knowing well that that gun for the last ten years had been perfectly innocent of powder; "and I suspect, my friend, you were not content with merely hiding in the garden, but thought you would pay a visit to the larder. Mrs. Blake has had intruders there before now, and if I recollect right it was for something of the kind I saw you in the Court House this morning."

"What wor I tew do?" asked the man sullenly. "One can't starve, an' I took nawt to speak on, and did no harm tew no-

body. Yow ar'n't a-goin' tew tell on me?" he asked again.

"Well, if I don't, and let you go, are you going to break into more houses and strip other people's larders?" asked Charles Rosslyn.

"Now! I ar had enuff o' that there work—I never did such afore an' I ar'n't a goin' to do it agin. I never seed the inside of a prison afore, an' I reckon it'll be long enough afore I see 't agin. If I can on'y hide for an hour or tew till they're tired o' huntin' arter me—I heerd 'em arter me as sune as I wor over the prison wall, an' they'll be huntin' the town all over sune—I'd get away tew the country then, an' take care nobody in St. Ewald's see or hear o' me for one while. 'T'on't dew for me to leave this here jis now," he added, looking at the Rev. Charles to see if he understood his plea for shelter; "in an hour or

tew they'll be tired o' looking, an' give it up for a bad job."

"That means, you expect me to harbour you here till the pursuit is over?" asked Charles Rosslyn.

"I'll be cotched and dragged back, if yow 'on't, an' what for should I be sent to jaale?" the other asked sullenly; "jis for an old coat an' a bit o' grub, an' I starvin'. That 'oud be a shame, that 'oud. I woun't ha' took nuthin' if I'd on'y been in work."

"Well, come in the other room with me, and lie down on the rug. You're safe here for an hour, at least." And he led the way into the small parlour, and pointing to the remains of his supper, said—"If you hadn't time to eat your own before you came away, take some now; it may be a long while before you get any breakfast, unless it's a turnip or so in the fields."

The other sat down and ate hurriedly and ravenously—a man evidently little used to the refinements of the table, and who felt in his pocket for his own clasp knife (taken from him when arrested) before using one of those upon the tray, and bolted huge morsels greedily.

“I cou’nt stummack my dinner,” he said. “The sight o’ them there high walls wor enough, and when they fetched my supper I wor tew busy wonderin’ how tew git thru ’um. Ha, bor !” he added, with a low chuckle, “I shou’d say I didn’t larn haow tew burds-nest when a boy for nuthin’.”

When he had finished his meal—one that would make Mrs. Prew think her lodger must have brought at least three or four friends home with him to share his supper, he flung himself down at Rosslyn’s bidding on the hearth-rug, and slept for an hour, when his host woke him.

“I should think you might go safely now. The night is darker than ever, and you may steal out of the town and into the open country, unperceived,” he said, as the fellow shook himself like some huge dog, passed his great hand through his hair, and then looked about him as much alert as he ever was. “And now,” he added, “if your friends from the prison *should* come across you, there is no occasion to say where you’ve passed the night, nor to mention where you obtained this,” he added, taking down an old light upper-coat from a peg. “I think we’re near enough of a size for this to fit you, and it may help you to pass muster at a distance. There now, come softly;—and I suppose you are not too well off for money, eh,—folks of your stamp who break into larders of nights seldom are. Heaven knows I’ve not much myself; but take this, and just try

to keep clear of either court-house or prison again."

He gave him some silver, which the other took with hastily muttered thanks; then he drew on the coat, a large loose paletot, and the effect at a little distance was enough of a metamorphosis to render any mounted patrol less likely to feel that he had to deal with a suspicious character. If seen at all that night he would be more likely taken for a person of the better classes hastening home from a party, than a runaway prisoner in search of a hiding-place.

Mr. Rosslyn opened the street door softly, and his guest stepped out into the quiet street, and the still, dark, sultry, early morning.

"I 'on't forget to-night," he said, stopping when outside the threshold. Perhaps he felt some gratitude, but was

puzzled how to express it—the very words might fail him out of his scant vocabulary.

“Don’t,” said Mr. Rosslyn. “But I’d rather you did not forget this morning.”

Then the other slunk away up the street—not with the stealthy tread of a practised thief, however, but with the heavy walk of one who has lost the natural elasticity of his step through over-heavy and over-early labour.

Had he ever been a boy to bound after hoop, or play at ball,—ever a child to nestle in his mother’s arms and coo laughingly in her face? Mr. Rosslyn asked himself these questions, and felt a little comforted when he thought of the bird’s-nesting. At any rate he had shown himself young there, if only in his predatory instinct. So he disap-

peared into the darkness, going back—it was the best that could be hoped for him—to herd with his fellow-clods—to work till his frame was bent double, and his knees would no longer bear him,—to gather in harvests of which he should reap such scanty fruits,—to toil through winter snow and summer sun, for poorer fare and meaner shelter than the brutes that worked with him.

That was the best that could be hoped for. And the worst?—Well, it might be a hayrick fired, or a gamekeeper murdered—if ever the wolfish instinct woke at last, and learned that if no other capabilities had been given it, it had at least the fell power of destruction in common with its kind.

A dangerous creature to be at large. Something told Charles Rosslyn this, as

he listened to the heavy steps that died away in the distance. Would it not have been better to have sent him back to the prison, where at least they kept such beings in some sort of quietness? Then he laughed the thought away, as he turned from the door—laughing, too, at the incongruity of himself, sometime curate of Mile Green, now assistant-master at King Henry's, harbouring a felon—feeding, clothing, and sending him on his way.

“*Hommage aux dames!*” he murmured, as he prepared to spend the short remainder of the night in sleep. “I should never have done it if it had not been for the memory of the eyes that I saw bent on the rascal's face. If their owner only knew what a fool I have made of myself for their sake, would she think any better of me? Heaven knows! Women are “kittle gear,” those say who

know them best ; but some way or another it shall go hard but I will learn a little more before long of this one."

CHAPTER VI.

A GREAT SCHOLAR.

DR. LANGTON was not a popular man in St. Ewald's. The town did not expect very much of its head master, but the Doctor fell short of even its slight requirements. He was a man of a good old family in the midland counties; his life—all that was known of it, at least—was unimpeachably correct, and against his manners nothing could be said but that they were, if anything, too immaculate in their perfection. He was cold and stiff, but then every one in St. Ewald's was cold and stiff. There

was petrification in its air, so that the Doctor ought not to have elicited the dislike which he did ; but perhaps the real fault was, that in him the coldness and stiffness seemed thorough, to run all through, while in many instances the outward frost was but an artificial incrustation on the real kindliness of the nature beneath—latent fires underneath all the ice, while of the Doctor there could be no question but that he was ice to the core. He was a great classical scholar—it was believed by many, the greatest of the day ; and the people of St. Ewald's in general expected very little from their grammar school but Latin and Greek. Some little time before the Doctor's advent in the town a few of the more plebeian amongst the town council had expressed a wish that the more vulgar accomplishments of geography and spelling should be taught there, but these had been igno-

miniously scouted by the loftier-minded members of the corporation. It was a well-known fact that boys had left the school with an idea that it was quite as easy to get to France from St. Ewald's by land as to London, and with a confused idea that William of Orange and William the Conqueror were one and the same person. They wrote—pothooks and hangers ; they spelled English after their own fashion, which was not Dr. Johnson's, but they composed very fair Latin verses, and could speak Greek almost as fluently as their sisters at the boarding-schools could French.

This had been enough for the past generation of St. Ewald's boys ; the majority of the town council considered it ought to suffice for the present. The three R's could be taught at any charity school in the kingdom ; it was not worth while for King Henry the Eighth to have turned out the

monks and endowed the school with their lands if nothing higher could be acquired there. They were by no means great in scholarship themselves, these worthy burghers, but to have heard them talk you would have thought that every one owed whatever small success in life he had had, whether in bank, brewery, shop, or counting-house, to his thorough acquaintance with the classics, and that the one thing necessary for the success of King Henry's School and the welfare of the boys of St. Ewald's was to have a master who would turn out as many double firsts as possible.

There was a little jealousy in the minds of the townspeople of St. Ewald's just then, of St. Bede's, its thriving, vulgarly thriving neighbour, which had lately rebuilt its grammar school, and plumed itself upon eclipsing all the county in so doing. St.

Ewald's couldn't do that, but what it could do it would—buy with the endowments of the school the greatest classical scholar to be had; in fact, to use the words of one of their members—he was an ironmonger, and had lately added fire-arms to his stock—secure the greatest gun going. It was a vulgar expression, the more refined of them considered, but still it defined what they wanted, a Great Gun that should fire off more Latin and Greek than any other gun in existence.

They certainly had this in Dr. Langton. In addition to all his other merits, he had edited Ovid, and this went a long way with the town council of St. Ewald's. It was as yet the crowning work of the Doctor's life, and they were almost as proud of it as he was. They couldn't have understood half-a-dozen lines of it without a translation, which perhaps was all the better; they would

scarcely have been edified if they could. But they were about as great in scholarship as the members of a town council generally are. They had, most of them, gone to the grammar school when they were young, but whatever Latin and Greek they had acquired, these had been long since pushed aside to make room for more practical matters. But they had profound faith in that edition of Ovid, although had a free translation of his pages been presented to them, there is very little doubt but that they would have been as much scandalized at the possibility of their sons construing them, as the boys' own maiden aunts would have been. But they said nothing about their own ignorance to one another. On the contrary, each man put on an air of much wisdom when he talked of that edition of Ovid, as if to have read it would have been as easy a

matter to him as the perusal of the weekly local paper.

In so aristocratic a town as St. Ewald's it was necessary that the head master of the Grammar School should be a gentleman by birth and family. The smallest tradesman, whose son was on the foundation, expected that as a matter of course.

Dr. Langton came up to their requirements there. And his career at Oxbridge had been eminently satisfactory. He had taken high honours, won a fellowship, and for five-and-twenty years, till the burghers of St. Ewald's wooed him from his classic retreat, to preside over King Henry's School, lived within the walls of his college, and shone a star of the first magnitude in the highest if not the most genial society of the University. But he had not been a popular man at Oxbridge, even amongst his fellows. He lived for learning, but unhappily he lived

for nothing else. From his quiet rooms within the college walls he had sent forth one elaborate treatise or translation after another, which, amidst certain circles who believe all literature is comprised in that written two thousand years ago, had won him no inconsiderable repute. But he had won as little liking there as he had done at St. Ewald's. He was too impeccable—too far above the weaknesses of our poor humanity.

Other men — luminaries of learning, too—felt smitten with a painful sense of weakness and frivolity in his presence. They could unbend at times, could understand a joke, and even make one. He never did. There is such a thing as out-Heroding Herod. Not one of the Oxbridge dignitaries would have made use of such an expression, but they felt it nevertheless—they were all Dons, but Dr. Langton was too great a Don, even for them.

And you may be sure that if his fellows disliked him, the students did so ten times more. Not the less that even the wildest of them felt instinctively that the Doctor would overlook a great sin against morals, far more easily than a small one against manners. If a young man sinned as youth will sin, so long as it was done decorously, and all open scandal avoided, the Doctor was content to ignore the matter altogether. But let him be seen in college precincts without his gown, stop away from chapel, or forget to doff his cap when meeting his superiors, and the Doctor's wrath was a thing to be dreaded.

Nay, amongst the students who knew him best, it was considered that, so far at least as the Doctor was concerned, it would be safer for one of their number to break almost every mandate in the deca-

logue than to sin against college discipline, or be plucked at an examination.

Perhaps this was not the best sort of man for the master of a public school,—he was certainly not the one most calculated to win the boys' hearts. He never used the cane, and he came very little in contact with any but the sixth form, and when he reproved, whatever the acerbity of his language, it was wholly free from coarseness or violence. But the boys disliked him as much as the students had done. And of course they did what boys are sure to do when they dislike a master, think the whole affair of education resolves itself into a fight between him and them—he, on his side, to cram as much as he can down their unwilling throats—they on their part to resist such cramming to the utmost.

Fortunately, perhaps, for the boys, they

saw very little of the autocrat of King Henry's. He lived his own life in the school walls much as he had done in the college. If lads came before him anxious for college honours, and determined to spare no effort to obtain them, he would help them. He could enter heartily into one thing—the ambition of the scholar, which had been the main spring of his own life. With any other feeling, to all appearance, he had no sympathy whatever. Boys—by which I mean creatures like Launce and Bertie Horton, full of animal life, boisterous mischief, freaks and fun—were as utterly incomprehensible to him as to their fathers.

It would have been almost impossible for a lad at King Henry's School to realize the almost idolatrous devotion which Arnold inspired, and which has found its best expression in a book that will be

read by English boys as long as English boys are to be found upon the earth. Dr. Langton would never have understood Tom Brown, and would never out of such material as Tom Brown—an honest, careless, hard-hitting, little-learning, average boy—have made the manly, loyal English gentleman, true to every sense of right, noble and brave to the heart's core, into which the years and the memory of a good man's life developed Tom at last. Tom Browns sometimes came to King Henry's, and left it, very little better for any teaching they received there,—sometimes the worse. Boys of that stamp don't care much for prizes or classic honours, and the Doctor only cared to deal with those who did.

Arnold knew that in the young souls committed to his charge, there was stuff, to be made, not merely into sixth-form boys and double-firsts, but into Christian men

of the foremost nation in the world, who, God willing, should carry its prestige to every quarter of the globe, and make it at home blessed and secure in the years when he should rest, but his works live after him. Arnold could see this in such lads as Brown and East, recognize the good sound English kernel underlying all the cribbing, the birds'-nesting, the endless freaks and boisterous mischief of these two, and out of them resolve that, with the Lord's help, he would make—not first-class scholars, that was a thing that might or might not be,—but good, true, sturdy workers, ready to put their hands to whatsoever they found to do, and for whose living in it the world should go on all the better.

Men for earth, and souls for God, *that* was what Arnold saw when he rose in schoolroom or in pulpit, and as master, or

as pastor, spoke to the young hearts before him ; and this was just what Dr. Langton never saw ; only possible prizemen in the school, and winners of honours at Oxbridge.

He spent his time, after the hours he gave to the sixth form, mostly in his study, where he had now a translation of Sophocles in progress. He said little of this, but he hoped it would eclipse even the edition of Ovid. And from what faint stir of life there was in the old town, he kept as much aloof as if the old abbey was still in existence, and he one of its monks. It was the veriest chance that he had even shown enough interest in the assizes to visit the court on the morning of their opening.

But, from time immemorial, the boys had had a holiday that day ; and was it fate, or the open door, or the stir and hum of the

vulgar crowd around it, that had caused Dr. Langton to give up the walk he had intended to take that summer morning, and for once made him appear at least to feel an interest in the common life around him, and take his place on the bench almost in front of the creature who seemed the very antipodes of himself, the low-browed, ill-favoured clod in the dock ?

He had not thought to go there that morning. He would almost as soon have thought of entering the town theatre, to see its most stirring melodrama performed, or of reading a sensational novel ; but he had gone.

“ There’s a divinity doth shape our ends,
Rough hew them as we will.”

Was it a divinity indeed—the divinity of an overruling Nemesis, that out of Dr. Langton’s roughly-hewn intention of taking a walk in the early morning, had

shaped the fact that such walk should terminate in the Court House of St. Ewald's face to face with Dick Girling on his trial for burglary ?

CHAPTER VII.

THE GIRL OF GENIUS.

AN old Elizabethan building, whose broad front and mullioned windows might have befitted the Hall of the parish better than the unpretending farmhouse which Mr. John Rosslyn always chose his dwelling to be considered. Warm in colour, and solid and massive in appearance, comfortable looking too, giving you the promise of good cheer and hospitable welcome within its walls, and with a picturesque beauty that has made more than one artist wish that it had been embowered amidst

old ancestral trees, and overlooking broad slopes of grass where nothing more plebeian browsed than deer, that so it might better adorn his canvas.

Instead of which the only trees near the house were those in its orchards at the rear. At a little distance, it is true, the dense foliage of a wood might be seen, but this was too far off to give the house the dignity or the picturesque effect a painter would have liked. And sheep and cows browsed in the fields that lay in front, and which were only divided from the flower-garden of the house by a slight iron railing. And instead of a well-gravelled avenue with branching trees on either side, a broad cart-road led direct from the house to the high road, while on either side of the main building might be seen haystacks and barns ; so that Rosslyn Grange, with all its stately, old-fashioned comeliness, its ample

rooms and imposing front, could really be considered nothing more than a farm house of the best description.

They had never been very rich, the Rosslyns, although one after the other they had lived in the old house from the time of its first erection in the sixteenth century. They had let off part of their land, and farmed the rest, but gradually the acres had passed into other hands, till when they came into John Rosslyn's, nothing remained but the house and the two fields immediately in front. He had purchased these of his elder brother who seemed to inherit his full share of the family mismanagement—his own and John's also—and had soon after gone abroad; and in the course of time John had put on a black hatband for him and solemnly announced to friends and neighbours the fact of his death.

John was altogether an exception to his race. He had had a legacy left him by a maternal aunt, and this he had invested prudently enough in the old house and what remained of the family acres. Also he married prudently,—a little below him, his wife being the daughter of a tenant farmer—but she was thrifty, good-tempered, and comely, brought him a small portion, and helped to increase his store. He missed her very much when she died—she had made him so thoroughly comfortable, and as it would not have been very easy to have given her a worthy successor, he never married again.

He rented three hundred acres which had once been part of the Grange estate, and he waited and watched, in the hope that some day he should be able to purchase them. He lived frugally and carefully; his wife's old nurse, who had afterwards

taken charge of her one child, was now his housekeeper. He sent his daughter Grace to a boarding school when her mother died, and a year ago had brought her home to the old house, where with the exception of the kitten she found herself the only young thing in it.

It was a change from the boarding school certainly. Mr. Rosslyn had slipped out of society or had let it go by him. The tenant farmer felt instinctively that he held himself above them, although his dress and his speech were alike of the plainest. And from the county people he himself had held aloof, rejecting their proffered civilities with a humility that perhaps had more pride in it than his avoidance of those in a lower grade.

The rector of the parish was a childless widower, the doctor an old bachelor, and Rosslyn Grange was full three miles from

St. Ewald's, where amongst the better class of the inhabitants some few remained who might have been disposed to take up Grace from their traditional acquaintance with her family, had she been a little nearer to them, or had they been rich enough to possess anything in the shape of a carriage.

So Grace had a lonely life, but on the whole not an unhappy one. She saw very little even of her father. All his morning hours were spent on the farm ; after the one o'clock dinner there was his pipe, and Grace might be called upon to give him two or three stirring tunes on the piano. Then there was a stroll round the fields till tea, and after tea Mr. Rosslyn looked over his account books, and when that was finished perhaps played a hand at cribbage or all-fours with Grace. Then supper, and "so to bed." One day after another with just

the varieties of the seasons, and thus the last year of Grace Rosslyn's life had gone on, and she was now seventeen.

A girl who might be called rather handsome than pretty, with a face and a figure that promised fairly enough for ripening well. But she was thin now, with the awkward thinness of a girl who had just done growing; and her dress did not fit well, her feet were badly clothed, and her hair—a dark brown, almost black, thick and luxuriant—was always carelessly arranged. The face was attractive, though faulty both in complexion and features, bright and varying, with hazel eyes, made darker by the locks that shaded them; sweet eyes enough to look upon when Grace was in a gracious humour. A broad forehead, freckled and sunburned like her hands; cheeks as rich and velvety as a peach; a large, firm, mobile mouth; a face whose

oval was almost perfect, and a finely formed and dimpled chin.

There was ample promise of a noble woman in her—of a woman who in after years would be of a large, imperial nature—lavish and self-sacrificing; firm friend; true wife; devoted mother; if ever husband called her his, or children hung around her. Only, sometimes, looking on Grace Rosslyn, it seemed as if for her no such commonplace future of a happy home and simple duties could be. Something in the depth of those eyes—something in the changeful face, bade one feel that here was a creature with some tragic threads woven in her life. Instinctively you thought of the Italian artist looking on the melancholy face of Charles the First, and foreboding a violent death to the original of the portrait; and if Grace was too young and bright, and her surroundings too commonplace for such

evil prophecies, still not the less it seemed as if her lot could not be like that of other women ; as if the simple, everyday happiness which they might rightly look for could never fall to her.

This life suited her, because she lived so little in it. Her father did not understand her, but neither had her schoolfellows ; and at least he left her to herself, which they very often had not done. She had plenty of time to write and to read, and above all to dream. At school there had been a certain routine, very often distasteful, but with which she was obliged to comply. Here, from morning to night, with the exception of the hour or two her father claimed, all was liberty.

There were not many books in the Grange—the Rosslins, until this younger generation had arisen, had not been much addicted to literature — but there

was a tolerable library in St. Ewald's, and her cousin directed her choice — only, perhaps, for a girl of Grace's character he might not be the best possible guide.

She read Browning and Tennyson, and Keats and Shelley, and she tried to read Wordsworth, but did not succeed very well. With Byron she was tolerably familiar, and she had Macaulay and Froude for her graver reading; but it was in the poets that she most especially delighted. She had her own ambition too. She had already begun to imitate; might she not some day rival them? and in doing so, take her place side by side with that cousin who was to outdo them all? Grace was a thorough woman. She had no craving for a solitary pinnacle on the temple of fame. Whatever heights she aspired to climb, she hoped it would be hand in hand with

another, higher, nobler, stronger than herself.

And this other was her cousin Charles, with whom all her life she had been in love.

They had been children together after a sort. He a strong, mischievous boy ; she not quite so strong, but equally mischievous a girl. The seven years' difference in their ages had only given him a right as it were to protect her ; to carry her in his arms over brooks ; climb trees for fruit, or birds' nests ; search banks for flowers, and perform all the little gallantries that a big boy in the country can render a little girl. Twice a year Mr. Rosslyn expected to see his nephew at the Grange, and the other had congratulated himself upon having such a place for his holidays. Even school itself would have been preferable to vacations spent with his aunt ; but the farm with its

horses to ride, its orchard to revel in, its dairy to visit, and its housekeeper, old Nurse Stokes, to tease, and little Grace to romp with, was Elysium itself.

Mr. Rosslyn interfered as little with Charles when on a visit, as he did with Grace at any time. He was welcome to the run of the house, as he expressed it; and when he went away, Nurse Stokes, without thinking it necessary to consult her master, made him just as large a cake as she did for Grace when her time came, put pots of jam and dozens of apples in his box, and so sent him off, feeling infinitely more concerned at his departure than her master did.

Mr. Rosslyn, indeed, had always considered his nephew much more the charge of his great-aunt, than of his father's brother. But when he had offended this lady, and so seriously damaged his own prospects, his

uncle welcomed him to his house with at least no more indifference than before, and allowed Grace and him to walk and ride together just as much as when they were boy and girl—and to one of them at least such licence might still be given with the same impunity that it had been accorded in the days of Nurse Stokes and jam pots.

Grace was still to him “Little Grace,” for her pet name—“Graceless Grace,” when her untidiness or frowardness passed what he considered due bounds—just his cousin, nothing more, and never to be more, let Grace dream as she might, or Nurse Stokes look forward to the day when her child should change her state but not her name. He liked Grace thoroughly. “They had always hit it off well together,” he would have said. “If she had been his sister he could not have cared for her more; they had so much in common that it would have

been the oddest thing possible if they had not agreed."

.. That was just it. They had a great deal too much in common for the man ever to fall in love with the woman. He did not want what appeared to him to be a younger, weaker edition of himself, with all his faults and shortcomings intensified. Grace never saw this. She wrote, and so did he. They read the same poets, and generally admired the same passages. She was as fond as he of boating, riding, and skating, and it never occurred to her that the last girl a man thinks of falling in love with, is the one who is thoroughly *bonne camarade*.

And he underrated her, too, just as much as she overrated him. He saw nothing in her but a bright, clever, affectionate girl, who would grow out of her faults and her waywardness, and in due time settle down and

make a very fair average wife. He did not see that the girl, with all her deficiencies, her untrained nature, and her want of culture, had not only intellect, not merely talent, but that indefinable possession—that doubtful blessing, genius. And as yet the girl was not aware of it herself. She was hoping some day to achieve great things, so that she might stand upon his level, and already, though she knew it not, she stood upon a height to which he would never reach.

What would this gift bring her?—this gift which is generally thought so perilous for women—which the women who possess it are themselves the first to lament and to ask passionately why they have been so set apart from their sisterhood? This gift, which to a girl like her, with no mother's hand to guide—no maturer intellect to control—was likely to be so doubly dan-

gerous! With such a warm impressionable heart the outcome of it could never be happiness. She would love too well, because she would idealize—out of some mere mortal she would make a hero and a demigod, and when too late find what a world of wealth had been wasted upon one who would know so little of the value of the gift bestowed upon him, that he could not even be thought ungrateful for slighting it.

That was all that could be looked for in the days to come. In the days that were, this gift, at least, gave the life, which else in the lonely Grange might have been so dull, a glamour, that made it almost beautiful. It was a good thing to be left so much to herself, to dream her dreams, and hope her hopes—to revel as it were in Fairyland, disturbed so little by influences from the world without. She

had such an intense love of nature, that the woods, the fields, sufficed for her contentment; the glimpse of the world she obtained from her bedroom window, which overlooked the road, was as yet enough for her; every passing carriage, every laden waggon, was endowed by her vivid fancy with an interest of its own.

She mixed a little with the outer world too. Not in the household—Nurse Stokes would hardly have suffered much interference there; besides, she considered it was Gracie's play-time now. "She was young, and let her make the best of her young days now, they would be gone soon enough." But Grace was known in every cottage of her father's labourers. Mr. John Rosslyn paid his men as well as any farmer in the county, but though a just man, he did not pay more, and those he employed were as indifferently fed and housed as agricultural

labourers generally are, even under the best of masters. This was the standing trouble, the insoluble problem of Grace's life. She loved her father dearly, and with Grace it was positively painful to see the least speck of imperfection in those she loved. And yet it militated against all her ideas of justice, that those who tilled the earth and won its produce for others should have so little of it for themselves, that there should be so woful a discrepancy between the amply furnished table of the master and the board where, day after day, the men who toiled for him through heat and cold, sunshine and rain, sat down to mere potatoes or dry bread.

Thanks to Grace, her father's labourers very often sat down to much better fare. As Nurse Stokes said, "She wouldn't leave a bone in the larder if she had her own way," to which Grace had replied that "She cer-

tainly should if there was not any meat upon it." But still this was not a satisfactory solution of the matter. What the men needed, according to her, was justice, not charity ; the means to buy meat as well as bread for themselves without having to be indebted to kindness for what was really their due. Something was wrong on her father's farm just as it was wrong all over the kingdom ; and with Grace to see a wrong was to be troubled with a restless desire to rectify it. She seemed to bear other people's sins and shortcomings for them, so intense was her horror of the sin, so great her remorse for the injustice, others had committed. She honoured her father as well as loved him, keeping the fifth commandment much better than is often done now-a-days, and it was so difficult to reconcile this state of things with the reverence and affection she had for him. And

to John Rosslyn himself she would not have ventured to breathe a word of the doubts that troubled her. He was a good father, and his heart was wrapped up in her, but there was still a leaven of the old time in him when children waited for permission to sit down in their parents' presence, and scarcely ventured to speak without being first addressed. He would have been a hard father to a son; and though after his own fashion he petted his girl, still Grace felt as if there was always a certain line which she dared not cross; as if it would be a much safer and easier thing to take an undue familiarity with a crowned head than with her father.

Therefore she went on her own way, rectifying matters on the farm as far as she could, and thinking that the evils there, like the evils in the world around, would infallibly be rectified, sooner or later, and

wondering when the day would come that the cousin in whom her belief was as great as her love, would gird himself for the struggle in which he was not only to win fame for himself, but to strike a blow and say a word in behalf of those too weak to make an effort for themselves, too ignorantly dumb to find speech to tell of the long suffering they called life.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN OAKSTEAD COPSE.

IT was the day after the opening of the assizes, and Grace sat by her window, which was in the front of the house, looking out on the high road beyond the fields where the cattle browsed knee-deep in golden buttercups, or stretched themselves luxuriously in the summer sun. It was a glorious day; the sky was so blue and the earth so green, that their colouring alone was a delight, and the butterflies revelled in the sunshine, which the bees made more profitable use of, and the great dragon-flies,

gorgeous as Life Guardsmen, spread their wings of gauze, and displayed their tracery exultingly to the roses and the lilies in Grace's flower-garden, or hovered over the jasmine which climbed up to the window where the girl sat looking eagerly out on the high road.

She was looking for her cousin. He had promised to come that day and take her to the wood, and it was now late—past four—and he had not yet made his appearance. She was weary of waiting, but she never thought of blaming him. Something had occurred to hinder him; he had an unusual number of themes to look over, or he might not be well. She was never really angry with him. Sometimes apparently froward and wayward when he had teased her a little too severely, but in reality he could do no wrong in her eyes. Like a mantle, her love covered all his faults. Another

girl knowing Mr. Rosslyn as intimately as did his cousin might have suspected him of having been tempted by a companion to row on the river, or hold a bat at cricket; or a new parcel of books might have come in at the Athenæum, and he might be turning over their leaves. Any one of these reasons would have been a not improbable cause for the delay, but Grace never thought of one of them. If she had, she might have grieved, but she would have excused her cousin all the same. She was imperious and wilful enough at times, but in her love humbleness itself.

She was an unformed girl enough as yet, with her fair share of folly and wilfulness, but this love of hers was very real and true; so real and true that, in this world at least, it could never come to full fruition. A love that had something tragic in its very in-

tensity. A love of which one could not foresee the ending, but that one felt intuitively could never terminate in bridal favours or wedding peals. A love that comes to break a heart or mar a life, for never can the nature that pours it forth meet with a like love in return, and the nature that *can* feel such a love is not one foredoomed to happiness, or to be satisfied when it perceives how little it receives for all it gives.

The old eight-day clock on the stairs struck four, and Grace turned weary and heart-sick from the window. She threw on her hat and went down the broad oaken staircase and into the large flagged hall, cool even on the sunniest day. "He will not come now," she murmured, and passed from the hall into her own little flower-garden, where the golden escolchias glittered in the sun, and snapdragons, Canterbury

bells, and sweet-williams offered their treasures to the bees that flew around them. It was a mass of disordered brightness and colour, and Grace had a pride and a pleasure in it which she could never have taken in one more trimly arranged. But to-day she passed all by, with a languid step went through the back garden and the orchard, crossed a field, and so into the wood beyond.

It was a gloomy place—gloomy and sad even on this bright day; the trees grew thick and the underwood filled up the spaces closely between them. It was not a favourite place, though in spring the violets nestled lovingly at the roots of the trees, and in autumn the nuts grew in thick clusters above them. The wood had an ill fame. The memory of two violent deaths hung around it; and there was a weird prophecy that their number

would have to be completed by a third: so never lover strolled beneath the trees of Oakstead Copse, never urchin clambered up their heights for birds' nests, or children gathered posies at their roots. It was all the better for the game, so the master of Rosslyn Grange said; the ghosts were the best game preservers that he could have.

But the wood had an especial charm for Grace. Of course she knew the legend connected with it, and had an implicit belief in the third victim that was to be. Her belief never kept her from the wood, however. A fearless girl, she would have entered it as readily at midnight as at mid-day—only at midnight there would have been the same delicious thrill she would have experienced on entering a haunted house or a churchyard at that hour. Grace was just superstitious enough to enjoy the

wood a great deal more on account of the ghostly element pervading it.

The girl walked on dreamily ; a book, which she had taken up mechanically, under her arm ; and at length seated herself in her favourite spot. It was a strange one for her to choose, but here she often came and sat and dreamed the hours away ; the foot of an old ruined tree whose few remaining branches took weird and ghastly shapes in the twilight. About two yards from this the ground shelved away so abruptly as to form a miniature precipice, and at the foot of this was a deep dark pool, which it was said had been the scene of the two tragedies to which the wood owed its ill name. Once a babe had been found there foully murdered ; next a man's face had looked up white and grim from the deep water : and it was said that the third victim would be a woman.

It was this weird supernatural element which gave the wood so much of its charm to Grace. Even the dim vague horror of the thought that she might be the next victim, had at times an indescribable charm for her. There was something thrilling in the thought of having her future foretold; her fate foredoomed. The pool had a strange fascination for her when she looked into its waters, and thought how still must be the sleep they gave.

She leaned back, the moss-covered roots of the tree forming a sufficiently comfortable seat for her. She did not open her book but peered up at the blue sky, and thought sadly of Cousin Charles wasting these bright hours in the dull stillness of St. Ewald's, and presently she heard a slight noise, and, looking round in the expectation of seeing a rabbit or a weasel, saw below her on the opposite side of the pool, crouch-

ing down beneath the ferns that there grew thick and rank, the recumbent figure of a man.

Grace was not at all a timid girl, but she did not like this man's face. The dull heavy eyes almost brightened as they bent upon her with a coarse admiration which almost angered her. He was roughly clad, like a farm labourer, with the exception of a light overcoat which was hardly in keeping with his other garments, and one foot was bare but for a cotton handkerchief with which he had bound it as though it had been hurt.

She felt annoyed by his presence ; it was so rare a thing for any one to disturb her privacy in the wood ; but she felt still more annoyed by his admiration. She was by no means disposed to play Iphigenia to such a Cymon, and rose to go. Then she noticed his foot, and his apparent

hurt and helplessness moved her to pity.

“Have you lamed yourself?” she said, pointing to the bandage.

“Ees, an’t it dew hurt awful,” was the answer, which was true, “an’ I’m pretty nigh starved an’ ain’t had a bit o’ nuthen tew eat fower the last fower-and-twenty hours.” And this was not quite so true, seeing that the speaker had made a very excellent supper or breakfast at the Rev. Charles Rosslyn’s expense.

Grace was a generous girl, and at the sight of the man’s material suffering she forgot the coarse admiration which had offended her. “I’ll fetch you something to eat,” she said, “but what will you do about getting away? You can’t stop here all night.”

“Yes I wool, I’ll stop a bit an’ rest, an’ when ’tis dark, scrawle along as well as I

can," was the answer. "My foot 'll be rested then. I hurt it toppin' over the trunk of a tree this mornin', afore daylight."

"And you've lain here ever since!" cried Grace, pityingly; all her instinctive dislike of the man and his coarse admiration of her forgotten in her pity. "You must be dreadfully hungry. I'll get you something to eat at once."

Away she ran and was soon in the cool stone larder of the Grange. It was always well supplied, for the master, in spite of his economy, liked a liberal table. She selected a crusty loaf, the remainder of a cold veal pie, a piece of cheese, and a lettuce. Then she filled a bottle with ale, and placing this and the viands in a basket ran off without Nurse Stokes detecting her. It would not have altered matters very much if she had done so; Grace would have had her way

all the same ; still, as she said, " it was just as well to have it in peace and quietness."

She gave the contents of her basket to the vagrant, and, without waiting for his thanks, hurried away. Even as he took the food there was something distasteful in his manner that made her turn from him with instinctive repugnance. Yet Grace liked admiration well enough ; was pleased when the children at the cottage called her the pretty lady ; when she saw the stolid faces of the labourers on the farm brighten up at her approach ; when she saw the passers-by turn back and look at her with undisguised approval on market days as when her father drove her in his gig into the town ; but something in this man's look made her shudder and feel almost thankful for his helplessness.

However, he had done something for her —given her another subject for her thoughts

besides her cousin, and so, returning to the entrance of the wood where she would be quite out of the vagrant's sight, she sat down and was soon absorbed in the opening verses of the Princess.

CHAPTER IX.

DR. LANGTON'S RIDE.

IF over all St. Ewald's hung a stillness and quietness as though life there stood stagnant, and all existence was but vegetation, the stillness and the quietness—with the exception of the times when, as the boys went to and from their studies, their shouts and laughter echoed in the old buildings—were greatest in the precincts of the school.

The place was as hushed as if it were still a convent; and the grey walls, which in many places would have mouldered

away, but for the ivy that kept them together, the dim small-paned windows, the gaps and cavities in which several swallows had built their nests, and where more than one owl made night musical, seemed as if the old monks, by whose wealth the buildings were endowed, and out of the shattered fragments of whose dwelling they had been erected, had even from their graves laid them under a curse and a spell, and condemned them to a stillness as deep as the tombs where they themselves were mouldering.

But Dr. Langton liked the place better on this account. The old trees around, and the broad green sward at the rear of the buildings, reminded him of his beloved Oxbridge. His own house, which was at the end of the pile, had all its best windows looking on a broad expanse of grassy lawn, which had once been the

monks' orchard, but which had long since been exclusively appropriated to the head master of the school.

Its walls were built with the old abbey stones ; nay, in one part stood the remains of the refectory, and here and there were trees, whose gnarled, moss-grown trunks had been slender young saplings at the time of the abbey's glory, and which, even now, yielded apples of a kind not to be found in any other garden in the kingdom.

Only grass and trees ; the Doctor would have no flowers in his domain, and sometimes, when weary of his study, he came out here and walked leisurely up and down, much as he had formerly done on the velvet lawns of Oxbridge. Only his lawns were anything but velvet, the grass grew rough and thick, and only now and then, when its height made it unpleasant

for walking, was the gardener with his scythe admitted.

The paths were overgrown with weeds, and over all hung a decay as great as that which pervaded the building. But it suited the Doctor—it was not that he grudged the expense, but that it would have irked him to see any one at work here. It was his outdoor study in fact, and he could as little have borne to have it kept trim and bright by a gardener, as he would have liked his housemaid to have had the arrangement of his library.

I have said that the Doctor was not popular in St. Ewald's. In truth, he was the saddest disappointment the town had known for years. There was very little society, there being at least four distinct sets in the place, to say nothing of the tradespeople, who, as society goes, were,

not considered to exist at all, and in the highest of these sets—that composed of families linked more or less closely with the county magnates, the two rectors of St. Jude and St. Stephen, and a few half-pay officers—the head master of St. Ewald's had always formed an important unit.

Indeed, as a member of what we may term the Faubourg St. Germain of St. Ewald's, his rôle was a much more important one than that which he filled in his scholastic capacity. The school had never been very popular, and the fees, to all but the few free boys, were, in spite of the endowment, very high for a place so poor as St. Ewald's. But then, that mattered very little to the leading families, as very few of them had boys, and those who had preferred economising in other matters—(say in three hundred and sixty-four dinners per annum, for

everybody of any importance in St. Ewald's gave *one* good dinner yearly,) and sending their sons to a school whose prestige and exclusiveness made it a miniature Eton.

Nearly all the endowment went to the master, very little being left to keep the buildings in order, and it was always considered that in return for enjoying so well-paid and easy a post its occupant ought to be diligent in the performance of his social duties. And Dr. Langton ignored these completely. His predecessor had had open cricket days in the abbey ground, as the enclosure behind the head master's residence was termed, and entertained the visitors liberally to luncheon.

His wife and daughters had done their part, he himself had been a first-rate whist-player, and his dinners had been many and good. St. Ewald's—its upper ten at least—had deplored this excellent man when a fit

of gout carried him off to another and, I suppose we should say, a better world ; though, if neither port wine nor card tables were to be found there, it is to be feared he would regret the change of residence.

The upper classes in St. Ewald's had expected a great deal from Dr. Langton. It was not only that he was a good classical scholar, and one of themselves, but he was a bachelor, and his not being married had caused a mild elation to be felt in the bosoms of all the single ladies and widows of blood blue enough to aspire to the hand of the Head Master of St. Ewald's.

Dr. Langton had disappointed them all. There was nothing to be said against his scholarship, but then he was nothing but a scholar. His Latin and Greek were beyond all praise, but then he lived for nothing but Latin and Greek. He ignored his social duties completely. He certainly now-and-

then accepted invitations, but he never returned them, and when some audacious young lady had suggested that the abbey grounds would be charming for croquet, no monk, if croquet had been in his day, could have looked more scandalized at such a proposition. Altogether, although the mayor and town council still professed to have as much faith as ever in their great gun, the society of St. Ewald's felt that he was not only a bore, but an usurper, taking a place that another man might have occupied far more worthily.

He was set down by this time as confirmed in his celibacy, and never, in the memory of living woman, had an old bachelor held the head-mastership of St. Ewald's. His case was hopeless, and every single lady and widow gave him up in despair, and felt herself bitterly aggrieved in so doing. The Doctor's celibacy was a

wrong to each one of them. Gentlewomen had such a difficulty in finding husbands in St. Ewald's. The Doctor might, at least, have spared one of them that difficulty.

And yet the Doctor himself had not given up all thoughts of marriage. Life had flowed on not unpleasantly within the walls of his Alma Mater, and a woman there would have been a disturbing influence ; but of late he had thought such disturbance here might not be altogether unpleasant. He looked above fifty, but was in reality only forty-eight, and he might reasonably hope, if he did marry, to see some, at least, of his children attain maturity. He would have liked sons, to be proud of his honours and inherit his wealth, sons who would take good places at the Bar or in the Church, and add yet more renown to his name. He would

never have made a particularly affectionate father; but he felt that, with the income he now possessed, he was quite capable of being a just and fairly liberal one. Perhaps such dreams might not have occurred to him with the frequency they had done lately, had it not been that the face of Miss Lisdale mingled in them.

He had meant to marry when he first came to St. Ewald's, but not one of the ladies he had met possessed the qualifications he considered indispensable in a wife; and when once he saw that they, too, meant that he should marry, he had been proof against whatever few fascinations they might possess. And then when Miss Lisdale came in the way, he never stopped, as he had done with the others, to consider whether her age, health, position, manners, family, were such as to render her a suitable alliance for him, but fell as fool-

ishly and thoroughly in love, as if he had been one of his own sixth-form boys. He had seen her just six times—including the meeting in the court-house, when not a word had passed between them—and he had made up his mind that if he could not win this girl, then to the end of his days he would remain as very a celibate as any of the monks who had ever either feasted or fasted in that old refectory, whose ruins he daily looked upon.

Letitia Lisdale, or no other woman. The Doctor in his mature prime was in love to an extent that few would have deemed possible to him, even in his early days.

Still, looking keenly at the man, as he sat in his well-furnished study, leaning back and thinking neither how to construe some intricate passage in one of his favourite

poets, nor how to instil some idea of their beauties into the more hopeless of the sixth form, this passion of his did not seem altogether so impossible. The face was cold and hard, and utterly unloveable, but had it always been so? The firm, large mouth was not wholly that of a scholar. It spoke of a capacity for other enjoyments than purely æsthetic ones, and there were lines on the face that told of passions subdued, that yet might not be wholly outlived. Hard, keen, cold, clever and utterly pitiless and loveless, as this face seemed, still there was a dormant fire, and something almost akin to animalism in it when at rest—fire well kept under, but whose smouldering embers might yet awake—animalism, which culture and cultivation had each done its best to subdue, but which might yet, like some wild beast caged, and drugged into torpidity, wake

with a mad fury, and some day prove the master of the cold intellectuality that had so long enchained it.

It was just at the time that Grace Rosslyn was looking out so eagerly for her cousin, that the Doctor sat in his study brooding over his secret, with almost a boy's delight; waiting with a calm satisfaction till it was time for him to mount his horse, and ride leisurely to Compton Russet, where he had some business to transact with a tenant of his.

The Doctor had been buying land lately, where he could, with his spare savings,—the last thing, all the disengaged ladies in St. Ewald's said, a childless man ought to do with his property. But the Doctor hoped not to be childless always. Even now he was thinking of the farm he had last purchased, and of another near it that was likely to be in the market, and which, if

John Rosslyn did not secure, he wanted as suitable property to settle on a young wife "with remainder," &c., &c. It was pleasant pastime for a summer hour or two to think of the fair green fields and the income they would bring in. Pleasanter work still to think of the lady whom he hoped to endow with the fair lands of Tring's Farm and Nettlefold's Hope.

His horse was brought round at the appointed time,—a well-groomed, steady-paced animal—and he mounted and rode on. His way lay past Rosslyn Grange—a house of which the Doctor had known something in his youth; but he never visited there now. He would have had very little in common with its master, who had long forgotten the little Latin he ever knew, and whose literature was comprised in a weekly paper. But, perhaps not many men would have passed the house so care-

lessly and with so little pain as did the Doctor, for Hartley Rosslyn, who was to have been its master, had once been his friend and college companion. And Hartley's career had opened with every promise: he had had talents, kindness, good looks, good manners—everything but strength. And then the end had been a sad one, as it always is when nature gives so many gifts to one too weak to bear them. He had gone wrong—some cloud of shame and disgrace had fallen on him, and he had died, it was supposed, because he was unable to battle with the griefs that had come like armed men upon him.

The Doctor had no pity for his former friend, whose end was so much sadder a one than mere death. He had done his part by him in giving his son a post in the school, and, so far, the Doctor's conscience, never a very sensitive one, was satisfied.

He rode on, giving a careless look at the house, and observing—

“How fast the ivy grows on the end wall,” and then found his way towards the back, passing through the very fields which Grace had so recently traversed.

His nearest road was through the wood, and as he entered it he saw Grace sitting there with her book in her lap. She looked up at the sound of his horse’s hoofs, and recognising him, said “Good day.”

She would have liked to ask after her cousin, but of all people in the world the Doctor seemed the very last one a young lady in love could apply to for assistance. The Doctor returned her salutation, and rode on, without any other check or hindrance than that afforded by the varying nature of the path, which was not kept in the best of order, or by the overhanging branches of the trees, which

sometimes grew so low as to threaten to knock his hat off; and at last one bough, more impertinent than the rest, really did so, and threw it some distance from its owner. The hat rolled along with a perverse delight in its own undignified behaviour, which the hat of Dr. Langton ought never to have had. There was a faint breeze, and that assisted it in its mischief, for it never paused till it fell over the little precipice above the pool, and so to the very margin of the water below, where it rested, as if feeling that it had gone too far already, and remembered at last what was due to itself as Dr. Langton's hat, and so refrained from plunging into the pool, which a hat belonging to a less dignified personage might probably have done.

The Doctor was very much annoyed: he had to get off his horse and tether him to the branch of a tree while he dismounted

and went after his head gear. And though the precipice at the foot of which it lay was not a very lofty one; fifteen feet at the utmost, still it was steep, and a descent would be, to say the least, rather out of keeping with the Doctor's age and position. But there was nothing else for it. There was no way round that he knew of, and he would have to be careful how he got down, for the pool came within a foot of the little eminence on which he stood, and an incautious movement of his might send the hat which had lodged itself on this narrow strip into the water.

At last he was down, not without inflicting some damage on his black trousers and scratching his hands considerably. He felt a little ashamed of himself for having performed a feat which any one of his pupils would have done a great deal better, and was thankful, for a moment, that there was

no one to see him. Another moment, and he felt no longer thankful, for on the opposite bank lay a man stretched full-length on his side, with the ferns growing so thick around him, that it was no wonder that at first he had escaped the Doctor's view.

Had he not seen that same low, brutish face before, with the shaggy, unkempt hair and beetling brows? Was it not the very same upon which his eyes had rested yesterday with a vague wonder that anything so densely ignorant could be? He remembered now having heard that morning that one of the prisoners had escaped from gaol, and if this should be the fellow it might be rather an awkward encounter. He felt a little reassured when he looked at the man's bandaged foot, and he was about to climb up again, when the vagrant addressed him.

"I've a preshus long way to go, an' I've

lamed my foot ; give us something, mister, to buy a crust or a lift on the way.”

Had it not been for the man's apparent helplessness the Doctor might have thought it policy to have relieved him, but, as it was, there was no occasion to throw six-pence away. He turned from him, and fixing his hat firmly on his head, began to re-ascend the eminence—a more difficult task, even, than getting down had been, and the vagrant uttered a curse so like the growl of some wild animal, that the startled Doctor turned and looked again to assure himself that he was lame.

There he lay, coarsely clad, with his garment smeared with mire. The dirty cotton handkerchief round the wounded foot, one thick, heavy, hob-nailed boot upon the other; the rough, shaggy hair, the heavy, sallow face, the lowering eyes, all set him down as one of that low race of whom the Doctor

knew so little. Clods of the earth to till and sow ; clumsy, illiterate machines, to do the coarse drudgery by which only such as the Doctor could be fed ; lower in the scale of life, and infinitely less cared for, than the horse from which the Doctor had just dismounted. It was a relief to leave him behind. It was a blemish on the Doctor's cleanliness, a stain on his well-brushed clothes, a ruffling of the dignities with which he had begirt himself, as with a suit of buckram, that even for a second he should have been brought into contact with such a being. The world could not get on without creatures like this ; they were necessary blots upon its fair surface, but still if Dr. Langton had had the ordering of the world, would he not have contrived that some more shapely machines of brass and iron, dumb things of wheels and cranks, with no mouths to swear or eat, should per-

form the duties for which now, unhappily, it was needful to look to such living grossnesses as the man before him?

He did not take free breath till he was out of the wood, and on a broad field path with a hedge of mingled hawthorn and holly on the one side, and a broad field of corn on the other. What a comfort it was to think that the wretch in the field had hurt his foot! Large as the field was, it would have been positively annoying to have shared it with him, even had the noxiousness of his presence been the only annoyance that he might have to dread.

The field paths around this part of the country are ever treated on a most liberal scale, offering accommodation not merely for foot passengers and equestrians, but for carriages, so that you can combine the luxury of both a walk and a drive, sit in your carriage and rest, and stretch out your

arm and gather the wild roses and the blackberries that cluster on the one hand, or pull the ripening corn, or the tall grass just ready for the mower's scythe, on the other. To those who cannot walk these broad paths are inestimable, giving them the delight of being in the very midst of the fields; of "assisting" haymakers, sheep-shearers, or harvesters with their actual presence, instead of having to be content, as in other counties, with only looking over the hedge at them.

As the Doctor rode on he saw a cart coming towards him with two men in it, one of whom he recognised as the chief constable of St. Ewald's. Were they in search of the man in the wood? The Doctor very soon satisfied himself that they were. They had been looking for such a one in the neighbouring village without success, and to judge by the Doctor's

description they were now close on the object of their journey. They would have missed him altogether had it not been for this meeting, as they had intended to skirt round the wood, and search a little hamlet near its borders. The bridle road through Oakstead Copse was rough, and hardly wide enough for a cart, but they resolved to lead their horse through it, and so secure their prisoner. They thanked the Doctor for his information, and went on in much better spirits than before, and he proceeded on his way, grimly satisfied that he had done a meritorious action, and thinking with a sullen complacency how soon the wretch whose presence had come between the wind and his nobility would be laid so safely in St. Ewald's gaol, that there would be little chance of his breaking therefrom again.

CHAPTER X.

GRACE AND HER COUSIN.

“GRACE!”

Such a thrill and flush of joy, such a leaping of the heart, and a bounding of the blood, for he had come at last, and the whole world, for that day, at least, was changed.

He flung himself down by her side with the same easy careless *abandon* he always adopted towards her.

“I am past my time, Grace, and ashamed to confess the reason; but the truth is, I sat up very late last night, or, indeed, till

the small hours of the morning, and after dinner I fell asleep over a book. I can't lay the blame to the book either, for I think it is a good one; but indeed I was thoroughly tired out. Do n't be very angry with me."

Angry! she tried to look so for a moment, but it was such a poor pretence; she was so full of the unutterable rapture that his presence gave. And she looked anxiously at him to see if there had been any reason besides fatigue for that mid-day sleep. He was a little paler than usual, and she fancied had a shade less of his usual happy carelessness, so that when he said—

"Grace, I am tired still: do you mind if I smoke, and will you read to me? What have you there?—the 'Princess'? Go on, child; it is just the scene and the hour to enjoy 'Blow, Bugles, Blow,' to perfection."

Then Grace read, well and spiritedly as she always did, and after a time forgot even her anxiety in the poem, which, while it carried her out of herself, made her understand herself more thoroughly. *She* would never have entered into a theme of life from which love was excluded. Had she been a queen she must still have looked for her ruler ; having only the royalty of genius, she valued it only so far as in the coming years whatever fame and triumph it might bring would be shared by another. Household duties, fire-side love, even daily cares, Grace loved so well, that her genius would learn to irradiate all these,—like her beauty, it would lend another charm to her home, if love blessed that home.

She liked this poem—she sided with the poet, man though he was, and made her own shrewd little comments upon the failure of the Princess's scheme. But at

last she saw that her cousin was not attending to her, and she laid down the book.

“Still tired, Charles? Shut your eyes, and sleep, and I’ll fan the flies away from you with this fern-leaf.”

“Yes, I am tired, but neither of you nor the Princess. Tired of the life I am leading, for one thing.”

“I don’t wonder at it,” she said, eagerly; “I have often wondered how you could bear it so long; as if in all this world there was not fitter work for you to do than teach boys how to spell.”

“I don’t teach them spelling,” said Charles Rosslyn. “I doubt sometimes whether what I do teach is half so useful. And I think you’re wrong in running down my vocation. Don’t you remember Milton?”

“Yes, but you’re not Milton,” said Grace.

“And I think you’ve imitated him long enough in turning schoolmaster. Now, please try and copy him in other things.”

“Write another ‘Paradise Lost,’ for example.”

“If you can, but that’s not in your line. There are plenty of things that you can write and do, and they would make you famous now-a-days much sooner than epic poems. I wouldn’t stop here, I know, if I were you; I’d go to London, and see if I couldn’t find something there. Milton didn’t sit down and waste all his life in a country town that was just a century behind the age. I think myself St. Ewald’s must have been the very place where the Sleeping Beauty took that long nap, and they haven’t caught up the hundred years yet. Milton mixed with his fellow-men. Whom do you mix with? That old Doctor, who despises everything that isn’t two

thousand years old, and those two bears the other masters. You must find some fitter work than you now do; work that will make you famous, and by-and-bye you must get into Parliament; there are a great many wrong things in the world that want setting to rights. Milton did his best to mend matters while he was here. Try and copy him, then."

She flushed as she spoke. She believed all she said: believed that it was in him if he chose to win name and fame and a place second to none amongst his fellow-men. And to see him do that she would bear, if need be, the parting with him. Bear even the dread and the doubt that in that great London world he should see some one who would drive her from his thoughts. Bear anything, endure anything, rather than that he should waste his golden prime even by her side. But perfect love

casteth out all fear. And her love was perfect. He would return, loyal as any knight of old, to her who had sent him forth armed for conflict. He would never forget that it was her words which had urged him on; her courage which had made him brave; her faith in him which had made him believe in himself, and at last the secret which had been so long unspoken would find words, and he would claim her as the rightful guerdon of his endeavours.

She never thought that it was not with him as with her; that a love so great could be on her side, and he not share it. She did not know that the kindness and affection of which he was so lavish would never have been shown so freely had he loved. She thought nothing but the difference in their circumstances prevented his passing a barrier which as yet he had never over-

stepped. She did not know that with him there was no barrier to pass : that their pleasant, frank, cousinly intercourse sufficed him, and he never wished for more, and never dreamed but that it sufficed for her.

Being seven years her senior, and having had, for some part of his life at least, a fair share of intercourse with the world, while Grace, excepting for her trifling school experiences, had had none at all, he ought to have known better ; but he was a man, and therefore to a certain extent inherently selfish : and Grace amused him very much, and he liked her greatly, and never thought of loving her himself, or that this reading, and resting under trees, and strolling through wood paths, or by hedge sides, might lead to love on her part. His visits to the old Grange were just the brightest spots in his life.

How should he know that they might deprive Grace of all brightness in hers ?

“ I wish I were half such a fine fellow as you think me, Grace,” he said, weariedly ; and he meant it. He had not half the capabilities for which she gave him credit. Those graceful *vers de société* for which now and then he received a guinea from one or the other periodical were well enough in their way, but they had not the stamp of the true metal on them. Milton indeed ! He would never reach Tennyson’s shoulder, and those pleasant essays that now and then he knocked off, let him write as many as he might, would never give him that place amongst his fellow-men, to which Grace considered him at once entitled. And what was he to do with the life which since yesterday he had begun to think was likely to be wholly wasted as far as regarded the possible attain-

ment of the hopes that other men most prize?

Yesterday a woman's eyes had bade him feel that as regarded these at least he was wasting his hours, and to-day a woman's voice told the same thing, but bade him go forth from the little haven into which he had drifted, and where he was at least secure of daily bread, and strive until he should attain a place amongst the foremost. And it was not in him so to strive. He knew his own capacities better than the girl by his side, who, without either of them knowing it, judged his powers by her own undeveloped ones. It would never be his to win either fame or wealth by his pen, and what other course was before him? He had turned his back on the Church as a calling for which he was unfit. It was late for him to go to the Bar, and how was he to maintain himself till briefs came in?

He had not sufficient interest to obtain the lowest government appointment, and to the study of medicine the same obstacles presented themselves as to that for the Bar. And what other openings were there for him, a poor gentleman, in his own land? Should he do better if he left it and worked with his hands instead of his head, and cut out a home for himself with his axe in the far wilds? And if he did so, would the eyes that had aroused all these disquieting thoughts, and made him feel restless and ashamed of leading his present useless life, shine on him there? He smiled at the childishness of the thought, but not the less, even with his cousin's eyes fixed earnestly on his, resolved that come what would it should not be very long before he saw them again.

CHAPTER XI.

AN AWKWARD MEETING FOR THE DOCTOR.

THERE was a sound of wheels coming painfully along over the broken, rough and unequal surface of the bridle road. Grace and her cousin sat a little distance from it in a small grassy nook hemmed round with nut trees, and overshadowed by a magnificent beech. Grace did not move, but the Rev. Charles half rose lazily from his recumbent posture as a small cart (and fortunately, considering its present pathway, a strongly built one) came lumbering along.

A man led the horse, guiding him as best he might ; and within the cart were two others : one the chief constable of St. Ewald's, the other the vagrant Grace had relieved. He was looking more sullen than ever, with a black eye, and a broken head, from which a spot or two of blood was welling beneath the handkerchief with which his captors, after securing him, had had the humanity to bind it up. He had fought hardly for his liberty, as the bruised faces of his conquerors testified, and now sat, a sullen captive, compelled perforce to grace their triumph.

They were in high good humour in spite of their bruises, for which, now they had secured their prisoner, they bore him no ill will ; on the contrary, they intended to stop at the first wayside inn they came to, and regale him as well as themselves with beer. Seeing Grace and Charles Rosslyn,

they stopped, hoping that their praises would be a foretaste of those they might expect from the magistracy and public in general of St. Ewald's.

"We're got him," said Noakes, who led the cart, and pointed exultantly to the handcuffed wretch seated therein.

"Yes, we're got him," said Hubbins, complacently, from his seat by the prisoner. "And a tough fight we had, miss; it 'a made us plaguy thousty," and he looked significantly at Charles Rosslyn. Beer they meant to have, but still the beer might just as well be paid for by another person.

Grace sprang up and looked at the vagrant.

"Mayhap you're sin him in the wood, miss," said Hubbins; "hope he didn't skear ye."

"No, I'm not easily frightened," said

Grace. "But why have you got him, and where are you taking him?"

"Broke out o' jaale, miss. Let hisself down from the winder, an' climbed over the walls as if he'd been a fly. Cleverest thing I've ever knowed on, but clever as he is, jaale 'll hold him fast this time," and Mr. Hubbins laughed significantly.

He was evidently proud of his prisoner's prowess; it added to his own credit in capturing him.

"My friend of last night," thought Charles Rosslyn. "Well, I *do* hope he'll be considerate enough to say nothing of my hospitality."

The vagrant never raised his eyes. He was bearing his position with an apparently dogged indifference to its consequences.

"We'd a tough job on't," said Hubbins,

still hoping that Mr. Rosslyn would take the hint and think of beer.

And he took off his hat and wiped his forehead, and looked very hard at the gentleman before him, who did not appear at all disposed to remunerate him for his exertions. Mr. Hubbins, in disgust, was about to bid his coadjutor drive on, when the head of a horse appeared on a level with the cart, and his legs on the green sward by the side, there being no room for them upon the bridle path.

Dr. Langton was seated upon this animal, and he looked, with a grim complacency that reminded Grace of an inquisitor surveying the last new victim for a coming *auto da fé*, on the vagrant in the cart. His very handcuffs gave the Doctor a sense of satisfaction and security, and he felt more than ever satisfied with the share he had had in placing them upon him.

“You’ve got him, I see,” he said, much in the same tone that he might have spoken of a wild beast that had escaped from a menagerie, and whom he had helped to recapture; “did you find him where I told you?”

The creature understood English after all. His dull eyes gleamed, and a heavy scowl made the whole face gloomier than ever. Then he raised his eyes, and fixing them on the Doctor, said savagely :

“I’ll know yow agin, I reckon.”

The Doctor made no answer. He had done his part in assisting to have the wretch caught, and he cared very little about his implied threats. Indeed, by his unmoved manner, it would almost seem as if he had not heard them, and this goaded the vagrant still more. He burst into a torrent of oaths, and blasphemies, and menaces, that were doubly startling as

contrasted with his former phlegmatic stolidness. Charles Rosslyn would have liked to have drawn Grace safely out of hearing, but they were blocked in by the cart before them, and the bracken behind, to say nothing of the Doctor's horse.

“Drive on, my good fellows,” he said to the constables; “this is not quite the sort of thing for a lady to hear.”

Then the fellow paused in his foul torrent, and looked at him and Grace; a faint, a very faint gleam of recognition lighting up his dull grey eyes. Perhaps he really was almost human after all, for he said with a gruff awkwardness, that might be the nearest attempt he knew how to make at civility:

“I begs her pardon, sir, an' yours; but to think o' *he*,” and he glared evilly at the Doctor, “to give a poor fellow up to the constables, that had never done him the

least bit o' harm. I doan't blame thim, it's their business, an' folks ha' got to live somehow. But I think he might ha' let me stuck where I was with my hurt foot without tellin' 'em where he'd sin me. The beggar! Let him look to hisself, that's all! They woan't send me over the water for this, an' they can't keep me in jaale all my days, an' when I'm out—why somebody may come by brokin winders—it may be brokin bons."

"I hope so," thought the Rev. Charles, who was about as partial to his chief as were most other people. "I think it would have been wiser, to say nothing of its being in better taste, if he had not made known the secret of my interesting *protégé's* retreat."

The constables, not at all sorry, in spite of the Doctor's assistance towards the capture, that he was likely to have, some day,

a rather unpleasant return for it, were about to proceed, when Grace, full of pity for the vagrant whose impertinent admiration of herself she had quite forgotten, and of indignation against the Doctor, burst in impetuously :

“ My good men,—did Dr. Langton really tell you where to find this unhappy person ? Did he see him lying lamed and hurt, and almost starving, crouching in the wood, poor hunted creature, and betray him ? ”

“ Well, miss,” said Mr. Hubbins, in a tone that implied he did not wish to be too hard on the Doctor, “ he did see him, or he couldn’t ha’ told us on him. It wor wery kind, an’ saved us a lot o’ trouble, for we mightn’t ha’ gone to the wood till we’d been to two or three other places, an’ by that time you see our bird might ha’ flown.”

“And what had he done to be sent to prison for?” asked Grace.

“Broke into a larder, and stoalt his skinful,” said Noakes. “They hadn’t gi’en him above six weeks for’t, so he might as well a’ served his time out; he’ll have a twelvemonth now very likely, even if they let him off for that.”

“Poor wretch!” cried Grace. “No, don’t go, please. I want to speak to him. I am very sorry for you,” she said, addressing the vagrant. “When you leave prison come to me at Rosslyn Grange, then I will ask my father to find work for you on his farm, so that want may not tempt you to do wrong again.”

Then she turned to the Doctor.

“I wish I had known of these benevolent intentions of yours toward this poor miserable creature, whom you found lame and helpless, crouching in the wood. I’d have

had him taken to the Grange. You would scarcely have thought of looking for him there. But I think, myself, Dr. Langton, I would rather have been this wretched man, and have stolen a crust to save me from perishing, than the one that betrayed him in his need."

A faint, a very faint flush stole over the Doctor's face as she spoke, with tones and looks even more bitter than her words, but he answered her with perfect calmness, and only the slightest shade of sarcasm in his voice—

"Young ladies are apt to be carried away at times by their feelings, Miss Rosslyn. Allow me to congratulate you upon having found so worthy a subject to interest yourself in."

The vagrant in the cart had kept his eyes, from under their beetling brows, fixed on the Doctor. His captors, while Grace

had been speaking, had had their attention turned on her instead of him, so that in spite of his handcuffs he was able to get one hand to the pocket of his trowsers, and pull therefrom a sharp, jagged stone, which, perhaps, he might have placed away as a convenient weapon, if need came, or an opportunity to use it. There was the opportunity now. He threw it, with such force as his handcuffs allowed him to use, full at the Doctor. Had his hands been free he might have gone back to St. Ewald's jail to answer for a far more serious charge than petty larceny, or than breaking prison. As it was, the stone cut Dr. Langton so sharply on the temple, as to cause the blood to flow, and his assailant uttered a hoarse chuckle—

“Ha, ha! I reckon yow've not tould on me for nowt. Yow've gotten nearly as good as yow've gi'en.”

The Doctor wiped the blood away, but without a word more of complaint than consisted in telling Noakes and his coadjutor to drive on, and take the fellow to prison as soon as might be ; and as the cart rolled heavily on amidst the execrations his captors lavished on the vagrant, he followed, looking almost like another guardian of the prisoner.

“You’re a trump, Gracie! Your words have hit him harder than that fellow’s stone,” said her cousin, stretching himself lazily upon the grass. “What a comfort it was to have you pitching into the fellow as you did! But I’m afraid you haven’t done him much good. He is such a thorough pachyderm.”

Then Grace—her fit of excitement over—did what was not at all unusual with her at such times, and burst into tears, and her

cousin had to soothe and console her as best he might ; and Grace allowed herself to be comforted. And then each gave themselves up,—the one to the delirious happiness of the moment, the intense unutterable joy that the presence, and the sight, and the voice of the one upon whom she had flung with such mad haste all the treasures of her heart always brought her ; and the other to the placid enjoyment of the passing hour, the pleasant dreamy *dolce far niente* into which the rustling of the leaves, the notes of the birds, the scent of the wild-flowers, and the murmuring voice or the musical laughter of the girl at his side all helped to lull him.

It was just a rest in the mill-round of his daily life—a pleasant hour to pass—a pleasant hour to recall. And to her every moment was full of fate, lapping her yet

more fondly in that mad, wild dream, from which, when she woke, it would only be to curse the weakness and the madness that would make such waking crush her with its shame.

CHAPTER XII.

A WELCOME HOME.

A LONG passage led from the hall of Rosslyn Grange to a small room at the end of the building which was known as "master's." Here John Rosslyn kept his account-books and his gun, and here when he had letters to write, he wrote them, and transacted whatever other business he might have to do with pen and ink.

There were a few books in one recess : the Angler's Guide, and a County History, with some others of a similar class. Over

the mantelpiece was a map of the county, and an old bureau, black with age, stood opposite the fireplace, where Mr. Rosslyn kept his papers, and on the table in the middle of the room was a brass-bound desk.

Opposite the window, with more volumes in it, was a bookcase, and this, indeed, held all the literature that the family had accumulated for generations. Not a very large stock either, and seldom troubled by Grace, which, perhaps, was just as well. Perhaps, in right of the books and the bureau, this room might in a house of more pretensions have been called the study, but Rosslyn Grange made no pretensions at all, and so it was simply "master's room."

It suited John Rosslyn admirably. It was free from all household disturbance, or the smells of dinner. It was cool in sum-

mer, warm in winter, and it was easy for him to leave it and repair to his fields without taking the trouble to cross the long passage and the large hall. A low, strong oaken door was at one side of the fireplace, and Mr. Rosslyn was in the habit of going in and out of the house by this. He had a latch-key—Chubb's patent, and no one ever made use of this entrance but himself. Indeed, very few but himself and the domestic servants knew of it, as it was at the side of the house, and embowered in a mass of clematis and honeysuckle, beneath which John Rosslyn had to stoop his stately height whenever he went in or out of his little sanctum.

It was a few hours after the vagrant's recapture, and Mr. Rosslyn was sitting alone in his little room. The beauty of the day had given place to a stormy evening; rain was falling in torrents, and

every now and then the lightning shook the old house to its foundation. Through the crevices in the closed shutters, before his curtainless window, John Rosslyn could see the flashing of the lightning; but the storm only added to his sense of comfort. He had been busy looking over his accounts since tea, and the result had been very satisfactory.

He intended soon to join Grace and her cousin in the dining-room, where he had left them, the one reading, and the other pretending to work; but meanwhile he was indulging in a solitary pipe, to which the very pleasant state of his affairs, he considered, entitled him.

He was a tall well-built man some years under fifty, with a large massive face and dark hair slightly grizzled. It was not a bad face, for you would have expected justice almost as a matter of course from

its owner ; but it was hard, and stern, and narrow. It was the face of a man who had lived for many years of his life in a groove ; had become inured to one set of ideas, used to one light by which to view things, one measure to mete them by, and whose light was not the most favourable, whose measure never erred on the side of mercy. But he was in a good humour now, and as he leaned back in an old leather-covered arm-chair, something almost like complacency irradiated his features.

“ I shall do it yet, and if my lord goes on as he is doing much longer, he must sell or mortgage. I'll meet him either way. But I'd rather buy ; then, come what will, the child and the land are safe. I can tie it all up upon her, and if things go, as any fool may see they are going, why there'll still be the same name as ever in the old place. He'll make her a good husband. I think

she'll be master. Grace is clever—cleverer than he thinks for ; so much the better for him. She'll be a shrewd woman yet. She might do better, but blood's thicker than water, and it keeps it all in the name. Besides, she's set her heart upon him, and I wouldn't baulk the child as matters are. Bygones are bygones now — there's nothing to hinder her having her own way."

He softened a little, as he thought of his girl—always "the child" to him. Presently he took his pipe from his mouth, and listened attentively. A knock, faint and timid, was heard at the side door—that door which no one ever dreamed of using but himself. Was it fancy? or had the storm blown a branch against the door?

Again he listened, and this time the knock was repeated—a little more firmly,

but still wavering and uncertain. Then there came a burst of thunder louder than any that had preceded it, after which the knock was repeated, but more nervously and hurriedly.

It had an ominous sound, that tap against the rarely used door, made by some hand that seemed scared by its own act. Any one given to freaks of the imagination might have thought it was some poor, wayworn spirit feebly asking shelter in the abodes of men against the hard usage of the storm.

John Rosslyn was too practical to indulge in such idle fears. "Deb or Ann," he said, "been out sweethearting, and afraid to go round the house in the storm. I must let the jade in, but I shall tell Nurse Stokes to give her a good rating to-morrow."

He moved slowly towards the door with

a face so stern, that if indeed it were Deb or Ann outside, one look at it would be punishment enough without the promised chiding from Nurse Stokes. Then he took down the iron bar of the door—he had secured it himself for the night, before he sat down to his pipe—undrew the bolt, and, with deliberate slowness, opened the door. “The hussy will be wet through before she comes inside,” he said, with a grim satisfaction, as he did so, and stepped back to make way for whoever it might be that asked admittance.

The wind came pouring in, and then a swirl of rain, but, for a second, that was all.

“What foolery is this?” said John Rosslyn, angrily. “Come in this instant, or I’ll shut the door.”

And then there came in—neither Ann nor Deb, wet, tearful, draggled-tailed and

frightened, as he had expected,—but the tall, slight, bowed figure of a man wrapped up in a loose overcoat, from which the rain dripped heavily upon the floor, and with a travelling cap pulled low over the worn, thin face and the wet, grey hair ; and tremulous hands took hold of the first chair-back they came to, and held it tightly as if to find support.

Not a figure to cause much alarm, certainly. He had apparently no weapon about him, and his whole bearing was full of a timid deprecation, as if uncertain of his welcome, and yet there was something in it that almost implied he had hoped and counted on a welcome.

John Rosslyn looked at his guest curiously, for one moment, then, the next, turned pale, and leaned upon the table heavily. He recovered himself so far as to be able to walk to the side door, close

and bolt it ; then he came to the side of the fireplace, and stood right opposite his visitor, neither seating himself nor inviting him to do so, but looking on him with a sternness that had something almost implacable in it—it was so utterly cold and pitiless, and that changed not—no—knew not one shadow of relenting, when the other stretched forth his worn, feeble hands, and said in a whisper that was almost abject in its entreaty—

“ Brother !”

“ Four-and-twenty years ago I had one,” said John Rosslyn, after a pause, in a low husky tone. There is a French expression, *les larmes en la voix*. Tears would have been strange in either John Rosslyn’s eyes or voice ; but in his utterance now, there was an under-tone that spoke of some emotion as much stronger than mere tears as the suppressed anguish of a brave man is

than an hysterical woman's passion. There was a bitter memory of some wrong or shame that could never be wholly put away—an unrelenting, unforgiving pitilessness; but still, *still* there was some instinctive yearning, that, though all hope of its indulgence was futile, would make itself heard if it could do no more. He was a hard cold man, but not so wholly hard or cold as he wished to believe himself, or make this other think him.

“You've a trick of his voice,” he continued, “and a look of his face, and if he were living now, which God in His mercy forbid, he might not be unlike you—but it's four-and-twenty years ago since—he went away. I haven't seen him since, and I prayed God when he did go, that I never might. I have never heard from him all that time—I hoped that he was dead—news was brought me that he was : it was

the best thing I, or any one who knew him, and wished well to his child and mine, could hope for."

The man before him tottered to a chair. It might be weakness, but if so it was not wholly physical. Then he raised a piteous care-worn face to his brother, and with hands stretched forward almost as suppliantly as if he had been attempting to move a Judge above, instead of that infinitely harder judge, a fellow-mortal, said :

"John, it is I!"

And that meant that it was indeed he, the elder brother, who should have been the rightful head and prop of the family, and had been instead its bane and disgrace. And that his shame had not killed him ; no, nor the banishment from his home, and his country, and his friends. It meant that he had lived when he should have died, and that he had come back now and was a

stranger on what should have been his hearthstone, an interloper in his brother's house; an outcast whom that brother would not recognize.

And there John Rosslyn stood. To all appearance hard and cold as granite. Did he remember—if not, the suppliant before him did—that they had been boys together, slept in the same bed, called the same woman mother? Did *he* think of their young life in that old house, and the fields around, of the days when they had gone to the same school, and when the elder—always in “book learning” so much the cleverer of the two—had helped him with his lessons and his themes, even when he lost his own hours of play to do so? Did he think of the pranks they had played, the frolics they had had together? how they had sat side by side fishing in the same stream, ridden home together in

triumph on the harvest wain, and had their health drunk together as the two young masters ?

Did he think of all this ? No, nothing of it at all. He was steeling himself to what he thought was the one thing that must be done ; that with which no consideration of mercy, no relenting to the poor storm-beaten wayfarer before him, ought to interfere. Therefore he would only remember the elder son upon whom so many hopes had been built ; who, in right of his talents and the scholarships he had won, was sent to college, at an expense his family, yearly becoming more and more embarrassed, could ill afford ; who had done so well for a year, that the father and mother, when they died, within a few months of each other, had felt the bitterness of their last hour soothed by the hopeful promises of this their elder born. He

remembered how after a while, when the slight restraint imposed on him was withdrawn, he had gone from one folly to another, mortgaging yet more deeply the few acres left ; then crowned his folly by forming a marriage with a girl to whom any other man, if he had been fool enough to care for her, would *not* have been fool enough to shackle himself for life ; and crowned his sin by forging the name of the father of one of his friends, and then when exposure was impending and a prosecution actually commenced, had flown in dismay, parting with his birthright, not for a mess of pottage—John Rosslyn was too just a man to take advantage of the need even of the brother who had disgraced him—but for such price as he thought fair, and so had left his country without a word, to hide his head elsewhere under another name than the one that he had shamed.

This was all that he would think of now. Of the frank, generous, lavish nature that had won so much love, and yet had paved the way to such utter ruin ; of the buoyant sunny humour that had gained so many friends, and yet had left him friendless in the end ; of the tender spirit, loving and pitiful as a woman's, and whose pity and tenderness had only led him so much the more astray, he would recal nothing. This erring brother had been the plague spot of his race ; felon in act, and only by a hair-breadth had escaped the felon's brand. He could remember only this, that of him it might be said "better had he never been."

"John, it is I. After all these years will you give me no welcome back ?"

Then John Rosslyn spoke, still standing: he would not let the other see that he could be sufficiently at ease in his presence even to sit.

“What welcome should I give you?” he said, “what welcome can an honest man have for one who has done that which should set all honest men against him? What welcome can I give you to my father’s house, when if it is once known you are here, the constables may come with their warrant and carry you off to the jail. Old Glynne is living still, hearty as ever; he swore that he would never forgive you for having led his son wrong, and, since Arthur died abroad in difficulties, I think he has been harder than ever. I offered to pay him all he had lost by you. I’d no call to do it, I’d paid you a fair price for the land, but it didn’t suit me that any living man should say I or mine had cheated him. And he wouldn’t take it; said he’d not sell justice, and it was only justice that you should be punished. He’d have done just the same, he said, if forgery had been

still a hanging matter. For my sake, he said, unless he came across you, he would say nothing about the matter, but if he did, nothing should deter him from setting an example. He'll keep his word, I know it, nothing will prevent him. Once in a way I've met him at St. Bede's or St. Ewald's, and there's a look in his eyes when we *do* meet—though he's civil enough after his fashion—that tells me he has neither forgotten nor forgiven. After that, what sort of a welcome should I give you back?"

"If he only knew—if he only knew all," moaned the other. "It was not wholly for myself I did what I have cursed my right hand a thousand times over for doing; but we were all in need of money, Arthur Glynné, Langton, and I, and we thought that amongst us we should be able to take up the bill without his ever knowing of its existence. I hadn't above thirty pounds

for my share. The two others shared the rest, and if it hadn't been for that chance word old Marlowe dropped when he met Glynne on the Corn Exchange, three days after, he would never have been either the wiser or the poorer for that hundred pounds."

"So I told him," said John Rosslyn in the same unmoved voice, "and I told him too that his son, who got the bill discounted knowing it to be forged, was as bad as he who wrote his name. Arthur denied that he knew it; you know the story that he told of the manner in which you accounted to him for a bill with his father's name coming into your hands, and the old man pretended to believe him, though he must have felt pretty sure Arthur knew all about it, or he wouldn't have paid the bill himself. He was never the man to take the loss upon himself only that old Marlowe

shouldn't suffer. However, Langton confirmed Arthur's story, and my belief is that if the matter had come to a trial, these two would have gone into the witness box and told the same tale against you there. Damn them!"

The tone in which he uttered this oath was almost as monotonous and unmoved as that in which he had uttered all that had gone before, and yet he meant that curse to the full. But he was going through a hard task, and it would not do to let any emotion be perceptible either of anger or of any softer feeling.

"Old Glynne would never believe me," he said, "and if he once knows you are living and back, why I may as well break up house and home, and, if we can find such a place—for a bad name is borne on the wind like thistledown—go to one where ours has never been heard of." Then, after

a pause, he continued, "I'd so far forgiven you that I meant to do the best by your boy. He has not turned out so bad, considering. He's not one that will make money; but he's clever, and a gentleman, and my Grace and he, I think, fancy one another. I expect before many years I shall have got our own together again. Lord Ryles—he was a baby in arms when you went away—is making ducks and drakes of the property, and when fools scatter broadcast, wise men may come in for gleanings; your boy won't make much of a farmer, but Grace will grow into a shrewd woman, and when a man's land is his own, it's hard if he can't make both ends meet; besides, they'll have me to be bailiff for a long while yet I hope. Neither of the young' ones know anything of the past. To do Glynne justice, I believe he wouldn't be brute enough to tell them if

you kept out of the way, and Langton—did you know it?—he's head master of King Henry's here—will be safe to keep silence for his own sake. But if Glynne once knows you're back, I'd see my girl in her grave before she should call the son of a convicted felon, husband!"

Now it was all told, and Hartley Rosslyn knew for what he had returned to the place that was once his home. To be the blight of two young lives, to cover son and brother with such disgrace that the latter, to fly from it if possible, must leave the home and the heritage, which year by year he had been building up. To bring ruin and shame upon all that remained to him of kindred, to be looked upon as an outcast and worse than alien by them. For an alien could never do what he had done,—cover them with his own shame, shadow them with his own sin till a canker ate

away their good repute, and a stigma that this generation at least would not outlive, fell on their fair fame.

He comprehended it all now. But even his brother's words told him less than his pitiless, unflinching tone, and the steady, unchanging look and attitude. No word of welcome breathed, no hand held forth, and the pitiless sentence of expulsion uttered in tones whose unfaltering steadiness fell like a dead weight upon his ears. And he had so looked forward to this return ! Four-and-twenty years of banishment ! Surely in all that time his sin might be forgiven. He pictured John's child and his own, and the old homestead, and now it seemed that the only thing for him to do would be never to see those two about whom he had thought so much, but turn for ever from the place where he had been born, and his father had lived before him.

He rose to go.

“I wish I had never come,” he said.

“It would have been better,” said his brother, gravely. Then in a tone just one shade softer, he asked, “Have you money? If you want help in that way you shall have it, so far as I can give it without injuring Grace.”

He shook his head.

“I didn’t come as a beggar,” he answered. He had, though. A beggar for love and kindness, pity and forgiveness. A stone had been given him, and he was starving for the bread. Never mind, starvation either of soul or body is a sure death, and the sooner he was out of the world where his own brother looked him in the face and told him he had no right to be, the better.

He went towards the door and tried to open it with his small, thin hands. “The

bolt is as stiff as ever, John." That side entrance had been very serviceable to these two in many of their boyish pranks. They had crept in and out after dark that way, or early in the morning before the maids were astir, rejoicing in the possession of some secret, some trap to be examined, some birds' nest to be stolen; drawn together more closely than ever by the participation in some piece of mischief. That very bolt he was now trying to unfasten had always been a trouble. No amount of oil would make it move more easily, or prevent the ominous grating that sometimes it had so scared them to hear.

"Let me undo it," said his brother, and the bolt yielded beneath his firmer hand. He opened the door, and rain and wind together rushed in furiously. He relented a little — just enough to say, "Stay here till the storm is over. I

wouldn't turn a dog out such a night as this."

"Men have more to bear than dogs," said the other. "I have gone through worse things than this storm."

And in another second he was out, braving its fury, and John Rosslyn stood alone by his hearthstone.

"Have I done right? After all, were we not brothers? God forgive me if I have been too hard on him, but I couldn't let him shame the child."

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. CHUBB IN HIS OWN HOUSE.

MR. CHUBB was at home. His day's work was over. He had lectured his master on the impropriety of his interference, such interference having consisted in mildly expressing a wish that when he, Chubb, had time, a certain lawn should be duly attended to. It was so rare a thing for Mr. Horton to give directions that he was inclined to think Chubb was in the right for resenting them. He had been polite, with an elaborate courtesy, to his mistress, and shewn a promptitude that

was almost gallant in attending to some wishes of Miss Lisdale. He had rebuked Bertie for dragging down the ivy off a wall by climbing over it, with a dignified severity that was worthy of the head master of King Henry's himself. He had answered Launce, who had asked him the name of a flower, by giving it to him in Latin, and informing him that it belonged to the third order, according to the Linnæan system, and he had spent an hour and a half at least in scolding Bill, and finally, by way of a parting benediction, dismissed him with a stinging box on the ear which had had the effect of making that young gentleman declare solemnly to both cook and housemaid that he should cut the whole concern on the morrow, a threat which relieved Master William's mind without much alarming his auditors as to the probable loss of his valuable services, inasmuch as that ill-

used youth was in the habit of making it four days out of the seven.

Mr. Chubb's home was a comfortable one. It was a tidy four-roomed cottage, only separated from his master's residence by the width of the front garden. It had a small enclosure before it, and a porch with a seat on either side, and over this porch the large-flowered clematis grew and hung down in heavy clusters. The front room, which Mr. Chubb now graced with his presence, served as sitting-room and kitchen. There was a small fire in the grate, for Mrs. Chubb was ironing at a deal table some distance from her lord and master, who sat by the hearth in a comfortably-cushioned arm-chair, his slippered feet upon a stool, a small round table near him, at which sat the son and chief hope of the family, James, pupil teacher in a British school, engaged in preparing his lessons for the morning.

Mr. Chubb himself was reading a penny weekly paper, now and then favouring his family with some choice morsel therefrom; Jemima Chubb, or Mima, for shortness, a girl of thirteen, about soon to make her *début* in service, was engaged in plain work by the light of the one candle on the round table. The floor was red tiled, with a small square of carpet in the middle. In one corner was an eight-day clock, and opposite the door was a bureau, black with age, and on this was arranged Mr. Chubb's library, mostly books relating to horticultural subjects; and this library filled Mrs. Chubb's mind with mingled pride and awe. The Latin words impressed her with a sense of the profound learning of her husband, who understood and occasionally quoted them. The coloured engravings she looked upon as veritable works of art which could not be surpassed, while, as to her husband, she

believed in him even more than he did in himself.

Mr. Chubb was master in his own household. He governed it as successfully as he did his master. Fate had ill-used Mr. Chubb in not giving him a duke for his employer, and the dignity and emoluments of a Paxton. But in his own house Chubb set fate at defiance. Wife, son, daughter, these were all his slaves, his hearth a kingdom, and he ruled them, not too gently, his wife especially; but she was happy to be so ruled; she would rather have served a Chubb than have governed a smaller man.

Chubb was a short rotund man, with a bullet head, and a red wrinkled face. He had had a tolerable education, and his words were always well chosen, and, thanks to the dignity of his manner and the affable politeness of his conversation, he

had a knack of impressing every one he came near, with a belief that, of all professions, gardening was the most exalted, and of all gardeners Mr. Chubb was, if not the most fortunate, at any rate the most deserving of good fortune.

Mrs. Chubb was a comely fresh-coloured woman, ten years younger than her husband, with an expression of content and good humour that would have made the plainest face look pleasant. Indeed, she had never yet done wondering at her own good luck in being honoured with Mr. Chubb's preference.

She took in a little washing for two or three ladies. Mr. Chubb ignored this altogether. His wife's earnings made a very perceptible difference in the family comforts and the little hoard at the savings bank, but Mr. Chubb would never recognize the fact that they did so ; and of

laundresses in general, he was apt to speak with so superb a contempt, that even Mrs. Chubb, unpretending little body as she was, would scarcely have chosen to consider herself as one of the number.

There was a knock at the cottage door. Too hard to be made by knuckles, and legitimate knocker of course there was none. The inference the inmates of the cottage drew, was, that it was given by a stick. The night was so wild that they hardly expected a visitor, and concluded that whoever it was could not have come very far.

“Master Launcelot brought me a book,” said James Chubb, looking up briskly from the one on which he was employed.

“Master Bertie brought me the posy he promised,” said Mrs. Chubb, in the soft languid tone in which people of her class delight in Eastshire, and which has a won-

derfully mellowing and refining effect upon the local accent. "I hope he's not got wet a-gathering it," and she went quickly towards the door in the expectation of seeing Bertie's chubby face shining with the rain.

It was neither of the lads, but a gentleman, in his own eyes and those of the county in general, of infinitely more importance than any schoolboy in existence. Dr. Langton, dignified and erect as ever, although he had been fighting with the wind and the rain for the last half hour, entered the room.

After he had left the wood, he had turned aside to pay a formal visit to the widow of an old fellow Don, who had been tempted by the aristocratic prestige of St. Ewald's, and the cheapness of its house rent, to settle in its vicinity. This visit had delayed him so long, that the

storm had commenced soon after he left the lady. He had battled against it bravely enough, but at last, the lightning causing his horse to shy, he had tethered him to the gate-post of Mr. Chubb's garden, and advancing to the door knocked with his riding-whip to claim admittance.

Mrs. Chubb recognised her visitor. Every one in St. Ewald's and its vicinity knew the Doctor, at least by sight, and she curtsied and drew back, overcome with the unexpected honour of his presence. The Doctor, hat on head, looked round to see if any one could give him the help he required, then accosted Mr. Chubb in a tone which that worthy did not at all approve of as addressed to himself.

“My good man, I should be glad if you would take my horse to the ‘White Lion’,

and tell them to send a fly for me here. It is raining in torrents, and my horse is afraid of the lightning." He drew up towards the fire, but a tall linen horse covered with muslin dresses was in the way on that side of it which was nearest the door, and Mr. Chubb still retained his very comfortable arm-chair on the other and showed not the slightest inclination to leave it at the Doctor's bidding.

"James, shut that door!" he said, in his usual imperative tone. And James obeyed.

Mr. Chubb was evidently master of the house, and the situation.

Dr. Langton felt a little puzzled. Of the *οι πολλοι* he knew as little as he did of all boys but those in the sixth form; and Mr. Chubb appeared rather different to those vague ideas of them, which he had formed, whenever he did take the trouble

to have any ideas at all upon such a subject.

Mrs. Chubb came forward with as much tact as if she had been a duchess doing the honours of her drawing-room, brought forward another arm-chair nearly as comfortable as the one her husband occupied, and moved the horse with all its drapery further from the fire, so that it served as a screen between the Doctor and the draught of the door.

“Please to take a chair,” she said, with a little curtsy, and then looked towards her husband.

What would he do about the horse? The Doctor would certainly give a shilling if he obliged him in the matter, but she dared not even send James to the “White Lion,” without his father’s permission, and the tone in which the Doctor had spoken,

was one not likely to propitiate him, and it would take a great deal more than a shilling to induce Chubb to overlook any slight to his dignity.

Chubb, however, endorsed her invitation. "Be seated, Dr. Langton. I think it is Dr. Langton I have the honour of addressing." And he waved his hand towards the arm-chair, in a manner that told the Doctor he might sit now he had his permission.

Dr. Langton took the offered chair. The bright little fire was very pleasant after his buffeting with the rain. Mr. Chubb kept his seat with the air of a man who feels he has a right to occupy a place by his own hearth, even if a crowned head holds the one opposite to him. James and Mima bent demurely over their books and work. Mrs. Chubb fidgeted with the muslins on the horse, and over the Doctor's head looked

imploringly at her husband. Mr. Chubb turned over his paper.

“A stormy night, sir,” he said. “I am afraid it will beat down the growing corn. The country needs rain, too.”

“I am thinking of my horse,” said the Doctor. “Have you no one you could send as far as the ‘White Lion’ with him?” Even he felt awed by Chubb, and dared not offer him a shilling to go himself. Chubb was determined to secure the shilling, however, but without any abatement of his dignity.

“It will be rather injurious to him, especially if he’s heated, waiting in the rain. James, if you can spare a little time from your lessons, perhaps you wouldn’t mind running down to the ‘White Lion.’ I dare say Dr. Langton would make it worth your while. A boy can always find a use for a spare shilling or so,”

he added with a bland smile to the Doctor.

James looked at the Doctor, who gave him the expected shilling at once to hasten matters; then he ran off, and as he did so Bertie Horton came in, followed rather more leisurely by his elder brother. Under any circumstances Launce would have thought it beneath his dignity to hurry. The horse with its muslin hangings effectually screened the Doctor from their view at first, and they kept near the door, as they said, to let the rain run off them.

“We’ve been cricketing, and got wet,” said Launce. “So as we saw your door open, Mrs. Chubb, we thought we’d run in at once. I’ve got a book for Jim, somewhere in my pocket. I forgot to leave it as we went out. And, I say, isn’t it a chouse?—that old cad of a Doctor isn’t

going to give us a holiday the day of the flower-show. Just like the old sneak—leading us on to expect it, and then selling us all in the end.”

Mrs. Chubb made faces at Launce, as she stood at her table, iron in hand, but he did not understand them. Launce was always anxious for sympathy, and right or wrong he was sure of Mrs. Chubb.

“Yew had one yesterday,” she said in her soft, slow tones.

“So I had my dinner, and I shall want another to-morrow. Why, how could a fellow bear school if it wasn’t for the holidays? My belief is, Charley’s going to take one—I heard him tell Guts so.”

“Charley’s the mathematical, Guts is the classical master,” said Bertie, as he sat down by the table, and watched Mrs. Chubb’s evolutions with the goffering irons. “I

don't see much of Charley—I'm more with Guts."

"All the fools are," said Launce. "When a fellow's got such a thick skull that they can't beat anything else into it, they cram him with Latin and Greek. I'm going in for mathematics, with Charley. He and I are the only two decent fellows in the school. If it hadn't been for Latin and Greek I should like to know where that old Doctor would have been. My belief is, he hasn't half Charley's brains. Mrs. Chubb, what are you making such faces for?"

"We have a visitor, Master Launce, whom I think you have the pleasure of knowing—Dr. Langton," said Mr. Chubb, with a wave of his hand.

And Launcelot's face was a study as he caught sight of the Doctor, at last.

But Launce was equal to the occasion. He was a clever boy, and had not been at

a great public school in London for nothing.

“I’m in for it,” was his first thought, and his next, “I’ll get out of it, if I can.”

“Dr. Langton, I beg your pardon for what I said.”

The Doctor bowed stiffly.

Bertie’s blue eyes were dilating with terror. Mima Chubb trembled to her very shoes. Mrs. Chubb’s iron shook in her hand.

“I didn’t know you were here, sir,” continued Launce, in his most respectful tone, “or of course I should not have said what I did.—Hang the old sneak!” was his secret thought, “he’s booked me for a thousand lines—hexameters, every one of them. I shall have to show them up to Guts, and he *counts!*—I hope, sir,” said Launce, addressing the Doctor, “that you’ll overlook what I said, or, at any rate, in your capacity of master of King Henry’s.”

“Let me see you after school-time, to-morrow,” said the Doctor, stiffly.

“Booked for the thousand,” thought Launce, all his impudence failing him. He moved towards the door, when in came James Chubb.

“They haven’t a fly at the ‘White Lion,’ sir. All out. There’s a concert to-night, at the Athenæum. When they come back from taking the party they’ll send one round. But they don’t know how long that may be. They’re every one engaged, four deep.”

For a moment the Doctor looked disconcerted. It was not pleasant to be stopping there, with Mrs. Chubb ironing, and Mr. Chubb seated opposite to him, evidently, in his own opinion, and on his own hearth, at least as great a man as the Doctor. A bright idea struck Launce. He dashed out of the house, and in another minute

was in the bright, pretty drawing-room at home. They had none of them gone to the concert, and by the soft light of the lamp Letitia's fair face was looking lovelier than ever.

Mr. Horton was engaged in the perusal of a treatise on infusoria in general and the animalculæ that infest spring water in particular. Five minutes since he had been representing to Mrs. Horton that the well on their own property, in which she had especially delighted, was likely to be a source of unmitigated evil to the whole household. Mr. Hesketh was looking over his "Law Times," the last dozen copies of which he had brought down with him by way of light reading. Mrs. Horton looked up from her work with a little alarm as Launce, with his face wet and shining from the rain, rushed in.

"Old Grim's at Chubb's! — the Doc-

tor! He cut in there out of the rain. Don't you think, papa, we ought to ask him in here? They've sent for a fly to the 'White Lion,' and there won't be one these hours. That's a rum place for him to stop in, and if Chubb begins quoting Latin, which he's safe to do just to show off, and the Doctor sets him to rights—and he can't help doing it, I believe he'd correct a bishop if he was out in his cases—there'll be a precious row. We ought to have him in, and give him some wine, or some tea, or something, and see if we can't make the old cock comfortable."

Mr. Horton forgot all about the animalculæ that instant. He laid down the "Scientific Bull's Eye," and looked appealingly to Mr. Hesketh.

"As if it were not enough to have boys, but one must have their masters as well!

Masters, too, who inspire them with so little respect that they actually call them old cocks! For I presume, sir," he added, addressing Launce with no little severity, "that by old Grim you mean the head master of King Henry's. If I am not very much mistaken, I have heard that designation applied to him before."

"Well, we all do it, papa, just for a short name to call him by. We don't mean to be rude, you know, it's only our way. But I say, hadn't he better come in? There isn't another house but ours and Chubb's for a quarter of a mile, and it is raining like blazes, and if those two only get to their Latin, there'll be the jolliest flare up that ever was!"

"I shall catch my death of cold," said Mr. Horton, peevishly, "if I venture out such a night as this. Take my compliments to the Doctor, and say I shall be

greatly obliged if he will favour us by stepping in here till the rain is over. Oh, Lord! what lies one is obliged to tell to get through the world peaceably! Of all the men in this town the last one I wanted to be acquainted with was Doctor Langton. I wonder whatever one is expected to talk about to such a man."

"He won't come for *my* asking," said Launce, "catch him!" and he looked imploringly at Mr. Hesketh, who understood the look, and laid down the "Law Times." "Come and find me my boots and an umbrella, Launce, and I'll go," he said; and then as they went towards the door together, he observed in a lower tone, "Tomorrow morning, young gentleman, you shall tell me the reason of this very unusual interest on your part in your schoolmaster. I don't think I wrong you very

much by not imputing it entirely to pure respect for your dominie.”

And then he went into Mr. Chubb's, and with an elaborate courtesy entreated Dr. Langton to honour Fairleigh House with his presence till either the storm abated, or a carriage could be procured.

The Doctor accepted the invitation. If he had known how to bless, which he did not, he would certainly have bestowed benedictions on the storm which had procured it for him, and for the first time brought him into the home of the woman who had made him feel as he had never thought it was in him to feel again.

CHAPTER XIV.

SPRING HOPES IN AUTUMN HOURS.

“**I**M safe, Bertie! Letty’s done it! Old Grim’s spooney on her!”

“Then I hope he’ll give us a holiday on his wedding-day,” said Bertie, nestling under the bed-clothes.

“Wait till it comes—she’s no such flat,” said Master Launce; “but I sha’n’t get my thousand lines to-morrow. You’ll see if he don’t let me off with a wiggling when I go up to him.”

Then Launce coiled himself up to sleep. His *ruse* had succeeded to his heart’s con-

tent; the Doctor had been entertained to his own infinite gratification, and for very shame's sake he could not punish the son of his entertainer, seeing it was he who had prompted this hospitality, and therefore Launce went off to sleep with a mind untroubled by any misgivings as to the morrow.

That evening had been an eventful one to Cyril Langton. He had met Miss Lisdale at several of the stiff evening parties with which the upper class in St. Ewald's delighted to inflict martyrdom upon each other, and he had been so charmed with her, that he had resolved, as we have seen, to win her for his wife if such winning were possible. He had been debating within himself how best to obtain an introduction to her guardian's family, and all at once, through the merest accident, such introduction had been made easy

to him. He had spent the happiest evening in all his life, an evening such as till then he had not thought it possible that any one could spend; for to this man home had hitherto been nothing but a word. He had received formal hospitalities from his fellow dons at Oxbridge, set dinner-parties, or evening entertainments; but to how many such gatherings may a man go without knowing one whit more of the people he meets than if he had never seen them! Dr. Langton was the very last man whom even a fellow don would have thought of introducing into the bosom of his family, and here he had been at once set down in the midst of the household with which above all he wished to be on intimate terms.

They were kind people, every one of them, and their kindness had thawed even the Doctor. The three hours he had spent

in Mr. Horton's drawing-room had done more towards humanizing and softening the granite of his nature than even Mrs. Horton herself could have thought possible. Of course she read the Doctor's secret before he had been half that time under her roof. She had guessed it before; she was certain of it now, and she was sorry for him with all her heart. It was very desirable that Letitia should be married, and if only the Doctor had been twenty years younger, and altogether, outwardly and inwardly, a different man to what he was, Mrs. Horton could not have desired a better *parti* for her young friend. But if the Doctor was in a marrying mood it would be a great pity if such good intentions were frustrated. "It would be very much nicer for him, and very much better for the boys," thought Mrs. Horton. "If I'd my way, no single man should ever be

doctor, schoolmaster, or clergyman. What is a man good for unless he has a wife to look after him? What a good thing it would be for Bertie and Launce if the Doctor only had some comfortable body to see after his home, and the airing his linen, and send him in a proper frame of mind into the school-room! I'm certain the boys wouldn't get half as many impositions as they do now."

She so thoroughly believed in marriage as the one thing necessary for all men—good for women, but still not so wholly indispensable for them; after a sort they could stand alone, whereas a man always wanted a prop for his helplessness—that she resolved to find a wife before long for the Doctor. It would not be difficult to wean him from his fancy for Letitia; if matters came to an offer on his part, of course he would be refused, but then his heart would

be caught in the rebound and transferred to some one else—Maude Bridel or Gwendoline Layne, single ladies, young only by courtesy, of small fortunes and the best of families, for whom already Mrs. Horton had felt her heart moved within her to find mates. Either of these would do very nicely. The great thing was that the Doctor had been brought to feel that he wanted a wife: She would take care to find the right one for him.

And if ever there was a woman calculated to make a man feel in love with matrimony in the abstract, it was Mrs. Horton. She had had the knack of making every place around her 'home', even when she had been going about from one sea-side set of apartments to another, or sojourning in Continental hotels; but at Fairleigh House she had surpassed herself. Every room was full of that indefinable air of comfort, of repose

and security which only a woman perfect in her rôle as mistress and *ménagère* can give to her surroundings.

But Letitia would have conquered the Doctor even without such influence. He had long made up his mind that marriage was a desirable state for him to enter, if only he could meet with the right wife, and here she was for him.

If he had been inclined to waver before, wavering was impossible for him now. Miss Lisdale in full evening dress in other people's houses had charmed him as never woman had charmed him yet ; but Letty in her own home, in her simple muslin dress, working slippers for Mr. Hesketh, playing the old lawyer's favourite pieces—Letty, in short, at home was irresistible. And this man, so far older than his years, that many people—boys especially—had wondered if he had ever in all his life been young,—

this mere scholar with, to all appearance, pulses as dead as the languages he most delighted in,—hoped now to win what even in his youth might have been denied him, the love and loyalty of a woman just in her freshest and her fairest.

It was a mad dream. Was he in his dotage to form it? Was it an Indian summer of the blood that had stolen over him? But he had known no such summer before. When he should have thought of home, and wife, and children, he had given himself up to the amassing wealth and the acquisition of scholarship. Four-and-twenty of the best years of his life had been spent in laying the foundation of a fair fortune, and acquiring the knowledge of every idiom and inflection of two languages now spoken by no living man. He was old now in everything but his years and his constitution. The latter was still,

as he exultingly felt, better than many a far younger man's. He was grey, dry, and, to all appearance, tame and cold. What was there in him to win this girl who was smiling on him to-night simply because he was the tutor of two boys she liked, and whom she hoped he would not punish for their plain speaking?

Love was fooling him in his autumn days, that was all. He was dreaming of spring flowers ripening into summer fruits when there was nothing but sere and yellow leaves for him to gather. No harvest with its golden treasures, no vintage with its purple fruits as beautiful as precious. He had neither planted vines nor scattered seed, and it would profit him little to essay either in these latter days. For four-and-twenty years he had willed that his life should be arid as any desert. Could he turn it into a garden now?

Well, he thought nothing of all this as he went home that night, walking slowly, for the rain had left off, and they had forgotten to send the fly from the "White Lion." He was not sorry to walk ; no, not though the road gave way, at times, under his feet like a bog, though the wet dripped from the leaves of the trees upon him, and here and there large pools were in the path, into which he sometimes stepped up to his ankles. He was as heedless of all these minor inconveniences as if he had been a boy following a will-o'-the-wisp.

Indeed, was he not following one now ? Was it not dancing before his eyes and turning his brain, and was it not likely to lead him so wild a dance that perhaps in all his life he might never find safe footing again ?

Midsummer madness, indeed ; only why had it come to him when it was so long past his summer ?

It was a dark night, and likely to rain again before long, and the town was even darker than the open country, for from Easter till October, no gas was lit in St. Ewald's. Every light was out in the windows—they were early people in the old town—and the last fly had an hour since taken its occupants home from the concert in the Athenæum. The clock of St. Edwin's, the oldest church in all the county, struck twelve slowly, as the Doctor rang the postern bell and waited without his garden wall to be let in. A new day had begun for all. A new life for him, and he drew a breath that was almost a sigh of delight at the thought.

The school porter must be asleep, for he was slow in answering the Doctor's summons; and again he raised his hand to the bell, and then, for the first time, saw a slight, tall figure that had followed him,

although he knew it not, from the time when he had left Fairleigh House, and Mr. Hesketh's cheery voice, as he lighted him down the path and towards the gate, had bidden him good-night, and addressed him by his name.

He had not seen the start the wayfarer, who not two minutes since had left the shelter of Mr. Chubb's porch, where for above an hour he had been crouching from wind and rain, gave at these words, nor how, after a moment's hesitation, he had apparently resolved to follow him, and crossing the road when Mr. Hesketh had withdrawn with his lamp, had, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, kept him steadily in view.

The figure came up to him. "Cyril Langton, I should like to speak with you to-night."

The tones were tremulous, and they

seemed a shadow as it were of some voice which the Doctor had heard long ago in his former life, but so faint a shadow that it woke no recollections to induce him to parley with the man before him.

“It is an unseasonable hour,” he said, “for anything of the kind, even if I knew you, which I do not.”

He was about to pull the bell again when the man laid his hand upon him.

“You must speak to me to-night, Cyril Langton ; to-morrow I have heard it will be hardly safe for me to show my face where I was once known.”

“Possibly,” said the Doctor sternly, for he thought he now remembered the voice. “If you are the man I take you for, you may have good reasons for not caring to be seen in open daylight—though why you should have come back either by night or day, it is difficult to say. If you will

allow me I will ring the bell and take you into my house. You need not be afraid of my servant recognising you. He has only been ten years in this part of the world."

The Doctor's tone had a bitter grating politeness in it that fell like lumps of hail upon the other's ear. He said nothing, but gave a low, faint sigh, and standing away from the bell-handle, the Doctor pulled it again, and the porter, waking at last, came to the gate.

They went in under the dank, dripping trees and up the sodden gravel path. This entrance to the school-house was always dreary even on the brightest summer day. It was unused by the boys : they entered through the great old gates which swung back heavily on their hinges as Stubbs the porter opened them every morning. This side entrance only led to that part of the building especially appropriated to the

Doctor, and the effect, when once the postern was opened, and you went in under down-hanging laurels which almost swept your face, was almost as chilling as if you had descended into an ice-well.

The Doctor himself shivered to-night, but it was not wholly with the rain. If a corpse that had been buried four-and-twenty years, had risen and come back to earth a ghostly horror, could he have felt more surprise and awe than he did now, when this living ghost had spoken to him and with a word brought back things that, like himself, should have been dead and buried long ago?

With this one phantom had risen a thousand others. Memories of early days when he, Dr. Langton, had not been the staidest of the staid; the great scholar with a reputation, in his own branch of study at least, second to none: when, strange,

nay impossible, as it might seem to those who knew him now, Fellow of St. Mark's College, and head master of St. Ewald's, and not at all an unlikely man to have a Deanery offered him in the Cathedral town of Wichnor in the next county; one, too, who it was well known had declined a colonial bishopric as unworthy his acceptance—he had sown those wild oats which sooner or later are sure to bring a harvest which no one cares to gather.

All these four-and-twenty years he had lived a model life, not merely in seeming but in reality. He had put the sins of his youth far from him—why should they rise now, hideous, gibbering phantoms to tell him they would not be laid, that, let him loathe them as he might, still they would force themselves at last upon his memory? Dead and buried as they were, they would yet live in their consequences. Had this

witness and fellow-sharer of forbidden joys and sinful pleasures only come back to tell him that?

“Lights in my study, Stubbs,” he said to the porter. He would take this unwelcome guest there, where he would feel strong in all the signs of his new life, its immaculate respectability and decorum, of which the thick Turkey carpet on the floor, the well-stuffed oaken chairs, the heavy curtains, and above all the books in their unimpeachable bindings, were so many manifestations. He had taken all the rest of the furniture of the school-house at a valuation: the most modern articles were at least fifty years old, but they served the Doctor well enough. Only in his library was he luxurious—nay, more—scrupulously critical and correct. It was his home, his sanctum—his resting-place, if the few boys with whom he came in contact had been

more than ordinarily stupid, or the larger number whom he left to his subordinates more turbulent and noisy than usual.

The upholsterer had done his part towards this apartment: it was perhaps the best-furnished room in all St. Ewald's. But you saw in a moment on entering it, that it was not the upholsterer alone who had been at work; that over all the appointments a scholar and a student had presided, a man who loved his books and lived with and for them, to whom they had grown year after year to be the chief interest and aim of life; so that to many men, whose interests and aims were of the world, worldly,—to whom the living present instead of the dead past, the politics, hopes, struggles, movements of our time, the loves and charities of our daily life, seemed of greater moment than the right conjugation of a Greek verb, or the most delicate interpreta-

tion of a Latin idiom,—to whom the laughter of girls, and the prattle of children, even the exuberant shouts of boys, and all the ceaseless hum and stir that pervade this workaday world in the quietest village as well as in the greatest city were parts of that life-music without which their feet would weary to keep pace with its movements, this room so cold, so still, speaking as it did of a dead learning and a bygone literature, struck with a chillness even deeper than they felt when they passed under the low postern and the down-hanging laurels into the old-world abbey garden with its grass-covered paths and moss-grown trees.

The porter lit the lamp and then left the room. As he did so, the Doctor observed :

“ You can go to your own room, Stubbs—I shall not want you again—I shall show this—gentleman out myself.” Then he turned to his guest. “ Now, perhaps you

will be good enough to tell me what brings you here to-night, or rather, what brings you here at all?"

The other had seated himself, unasked—perhaps the Doctor might have omitted the courtesy purposely: but, however, he followed his visitor's example, and looked with a little curiosity, but not one shade of pity, at the face which was so worn and altered since he had seen it last.

"I did not know," was the answer given in feeble and uncertain tones, for the speaker was very weary with long buffeting with that night's storm—"I did not know till three hours ago that you were in this town—then I heard not only that, and the position you hold in it, but that he—Charley" (the thin lips quivered at the word)—"was your assistant. I thought you could tell me something of him—of his progress. Perhaps I should not have

troubled you, but I overheard your name as you left the house you came from to-night, and then I felt as if I must come at once and ask you how he—my boy—the son that I have never seen since he was a baby in the nurse's arms, fared. I could not help it—forgive the impulse—for the moment it was irresistible—I should think from what I heard to-night he is likely to make a better thing of his life than his father did before him ; will you tell me if it is really so ? I think I can go away feeling as much of happiness as I may ever hope to know, if I dare hope that the sins and errors of my own youth will not be repeated in his. I have come very far in the hope of seeing him. I find I must go away with that hope unfulfilled—I have been given out as one long dead,—for his sake and that of others, I must be content to be believed so—only tell me, you who must know him

best, seeing him day by day, is he what a better father than I might wish to see him?"

He spoke yearningly and pleadingly. At times there was a cadence in his voice and a pathos in his tones that was almost womanly—not womanish. A mother might with such a voice and such a look have asked a physician if her child was to live or die. But this man's question meant more than life or death to him. His own was a lost life—and knowing what that meant, he knew that he would rather have desired death for his son than that he should drag on the long aimless round from year to year, that he had done.

Dr. Langton looked at him a little more curiously than before. Four-and-twenty years since he had seen his son, and he was so tremulously anxious on his account!

"There's nothing to say against the

Reverend Charles Rosslyn," he said, in his driest voice. "I should have thought the position he holds in King Henry's School might have satisfied you on that point. He is a little odd, has a few peculiarities, which, considering his cloth, he would be better without, but still I am fairly satisfied with him on the whole."

It was scant praise, but it was a great deal for Dr. Langton. Hartley Rosslyn seemed content with it.

"Thank you," he said very humbly; "it is more than I had a right to hope for."

"Possibly." Then he waited as if expecting his visitor to go. The other looked at him wistfully, as if trying to trace something of the old familiar friend who had shared the follies of his youth, and something, perhaps, which deserved a harder name than follies, in the cold, grey face

before him. Dr. Langton grew impatient, and he showed it a little.

“Have you any more questions to ask me, or may I, in my turn, ask you if you mean to add to the folly of coming here the still greater folly of remaining? For your own sake and your son’s I believe it would not be very advisable for you to do so.”

If John Rosslyn’s tone had been hard, the Doctor’s was ten times more so. He had neither emotions nor feelings to suppress, except those which were purely personal. Anger at this unwelcome visit, fear of its possible consequences to himself. He was cased to all appearance in the proof armour of his respectability, and the unsullied decorum of his present life. Was there not one weak point through which he could be made to feel that he, too, was human, and, in his time, had shared to the full in all the weaknesses of

humanity in its wild youth? Even now could he not be brought to feel something for the man who had come back more than a stranger to his native place, and who only in the darkness dared revisit his home, or ask for tidings of his only son? Something in his apparent impassiveness roused Hartley Rosslyn as his brother's sternness had failed to do, and he cried—

“Is this all the welcome that you have to give me, Cyril Langton?”

The words were not much, but perhaps some memories of the Doctor's own gave them the meaning to which he answered—

“What welcome should I give you? I can only say that you have done an unwise thing in venturing here; that your son believes you dead, and that even he, if he knew all, would only have too much cause to regret the being undeceived.”

“If he knew all! If he knew that I

was weak enough, to peril my own honour and every prospect of my life for the sake of helping those whom I thought my friends in their need! Langton, you know the straits that Glynne and you were in—you especially—Glynne's dun might perhaps have waited, but not even for a day longer would that man Green defer his claim for the rent you owed him. You know that if he had made his threat good, and told the College authorities that you, a student, rented a furnished cottage of him, and for what purpose, you would have been ruined. My need was desperate too, I don't deny it, but exposure would not have done me one-half the evil that it would you. If I owed that man rent, at least it was for the home that sheltered my *wife!* I might have escaped with rustication, but nothing less than expulsion would have atoned for the breach of all decorum you had com-

mitted in running into debt on account of your mistress and your illegitimate child ; and you and Glynne both knew how the money was obtained by which I helped you.”

“I deny the latter part of your charge altogether,” and Dr. Langton’s face as he spoke turned yet a more leaden grey. “I was embarrassed at the time of which you speak. I had done a foolish thing—nay, a sinful one—of which I have repented all my life since. I was already beginning to feel the consequences of this indiscretion, and I asked you to help me with a small loan—I think it was thirty pounds. As you say, our common creditor refused to wait even another day for money that he certainly ought to have had long before. In a week at most I should have received my allowance, but he refused even to wait that week. You contrived to raise the necessary

sum to pacify him on your own account, and to enable me to do so on mine—I never asked you in what manner, I was too glad of the relief. If I had thought about how you had obtained it, I should have imagined that the aunt who afterwards adopted your boy, had helped you. I was thunder-struck when I learned the truth, and that you had absconded to escape prosecution for a forgery. When, a few years after, I heard that you had been seen in the hospital at Marseilles suffering under an illness from which recovery was believed impossible, I and even your own brother felt that it was for the best. Mr. Glynne was implacable—I believe is so still. I have done what I could to assist your son in his career, thinking that perhaps I could thus best repay whatever obligations I might be under to you. I am quite ready now to do so in a more direct form. I should have tendered

it to Mr. Glynne—after all, this money was rightly his—but that I knew your brother had at once offered restitution, and had had his offer rejected.” The Doctor took out his cheque-book, and dipping a pen in ink, appeared to make some calculations. “Interest and compound interest—I suppose I ought to pay both. Let you have obtained this money as you may, I borrowed it from you, and at the time was very thankful for the loan. I suppose that”—handing him a cheque—“will square it, and may, I hope, be of some service to you. You are possibly in want of money.”

“I dare say it is more plentiful with you than with me,” answered Hartley Rosslyn, as he took the paper which the other tendered him. “One hundred pounds. But I didn’t come to you for this; if it had not been for my boy I don’t know that I should have troubled you at all:” and

quietly, without any passion, but as if it were the most natural thing to do, he tore the cheque into small pieces, and laid them down with one long sigh. After all, what right had he to be so angry with the man who had been his friend, when his own brother had told him that they were kin no more? Was it not he who, through it all, was in the wrong? Why had he come back to shame these men with their unblemished names and decorous lives? He was too physically weak and worn to feel much anger with the man who had profited by his criminal action, and yet who could now tell him that its evil consequences must be on his head alone, or perhaps, when three hours ago he had stood an alien by his own hearth, and learnt that the barrier his sin had put between himself and all of his blood was one that would never be overpassed in this life, the

power of feeling had been, for a time at least, killed within him. He had been morally stunned and crushed ; all power of feeling anything, resentment, anger, sense of wrong, or injustice, seemed dead within him. He was strong enough to suffer, but not strong enough to murmur that his sufferings were too heavily meted out to him.

He got up to go. He was faint and weary, and had a dim, vague sense that it was many hours since he had tasted food. He had been face to face with his brother in his own old home, had stood by the fireside of his once familiar friend, and neither had asked him to drink wine or break bread. He was wet and cold, and yet his tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth ; his head was giddy, and try as he would to show no signs of weakness, his step was slow and uncertain.

“I thank you,” he said, “for what you

have told me of my son. I shall leave England soon, and, if possible, will see him once. You needn't be afraid, he shall never know from me, at least, that he has a father. I ought to have died four-and-twenty years ago. Well, I didn't, but life has been its own punishment."

He moved towards the door as he spoke, and the Doctor, rising silently, showed him the way out. It was beginning to rain again, but Hartley Rosslyn went out without heeding it, under the dripping laurels, and out of the low, narrow postern, into that outer world which could hardly be more hard and pitiless to him than had been the two hearths by which he had stood that night.

Why had he come back? His one-time friend asked himself this as he leaned back in his chair, shading his eyes with his hand, as if so he would shut out all sight

and memory of those other ghosts which this most unwelcome one had brought with him. Things that four-and-twenty years ago—when the disgrace and ruin of his friend, and his own hair-breadth escape, first from the exposure which his vulgar dun had threatened, and then from the yet more imminent danger of having his knowledge of the forgery known—he had resolved to put from him. It had cost him a little at the time to do this. He wondered now how it was that it had done so. With his mind full of the delicate beauty and graceful bearing of Letitia Lisdale, it seemed almost incredible that he could ever have found a pain in parting with the blue-eyed, round-faced, rosy-cheeked girl, for whom he had imperilled every prospect of his life. He shuddered now at the thought of his escape, but he wondered, too, how for

such a cause he could have incurred such peril.

Well, he had put her from him—her and her baby. What a sturdy, ruddy youngster it had been! He had felt a little fond of it, too, at the time, he remembered, and, when he took it in his arms, and it had pulled his hair, and played the uncouth baby gambols which till then had seemed to him so absurd when he had witnessed them in other children and their fathers, felt some regret that it could never bear his name, or be openly acknowledged as his own. But he had sent them both forth, mother and child. It would be impossible to acknowledge the one without the other, and marriage with Ann Clarke, a labourer's daughter, and sometime housemaid in his mother's service, would have been simply ruin.

He had provided for her, embarrassed as

ne was, with what, to one in her station, was a little dowry, and she had found a husband in one of her own class who had not made many scruples about the child. And she had died soon after—much about the time that Hartley Rosslyn's wife went out of the world, because, without her husband, life seemed too hard a thing to bear. What a fool he had always thought Hartley for marrying her! And how furious Hartley had been with him once for telling him so; resenting the mere supposition that he could have wronged her as an almost irreparable insult to them both.

Well, he had done his part by Hartley Rosslyn's boy. And then he wondered what had become of his own. Dead, most likely, long since. Left so young without its mother, it would miss her care, and pass out of a world where there was no place for it. Best so. It seemed hard to say it,

but he felt that he would rather be the father of the dead than of the unlearned, illiterate boor the adopted son of Ann Clarke's husband would be safe to grow up into.

Then with a great effort he drove Ann with her awkward prettiness and her chubby, large-limbed boy out of his thoughts, and, lighting his chamber candle, went to his room, hoping that no troublesome memories would haunt his dreams.

The next morning Mrs. Chubb opened her door, as she always did, at five minutes to six, that her lord and master might not have the trouble of doing so himself; and there, prone on the ground, wet through, though it had not rained for hours, with the bright morning sun shining down on his unconscious head, with the flowers, after the last night's storm, looking their freshest and brightest, with the birds rejoicing that

the darkness had fled away, and the light had come again, with all the sweet scents and sounds and colours of a summer morning so infinitely richer for the storm of the past night, lay one whom it seemed as if the tempest had made its victim, exacting from him the price of the freshness and beauty it had brought to all beside. It was Hartley Rosslyn, so low and broken down, with pulse so feebly flickering, that at first the good soul stooping over him thought that life itself had fled, and that he had crept there from the violence of the elements, only to find a nook in which to die, till Mr. Chubb, looking down upon him, pronounced him living yet, and ordering James to go for the nearest medical man, assisted the sufferer into his own house, and there left him.

“I shall tell Mr. Horton what is amiss,” he said—Chubb never deigned to use the

word "master." "If he knows what he ought to do, he'll send in brandy and wine, pay the doctor, and make it well up to you, Mrs. Chubb, for the loss of your time in attending him. If he does n't know what a gentleman should do in such a case, I've no doubt one of the ladies will tell him. I shall see Miss Lisdale when I take in the house vegetables." And then Chubb marched off with head erect as usual, speculating on the value at which Miss Lisdale would estimate his wife's services to the wayfarer he had taken in to his hearth, and the amount of broth and brandy that would be sent in for his consumption.

He felt himself very nearly allied to the good Samaritan; and his wife, as she hung over Hartley Rosslyn, trying to fan the faint sparks of life Mr. Chubb had detected into something like a flame, fully believed that he was so.

CHAPTER XV.

ST. EDGAR'S CHURCH.

OVER the tombs where sculptured knight and dame were resting side by side, soaring to the stained windows that let in golden and purple light upon the flags below, and up to the groined ceiling, whose rafters were supported by the outstretched wings of cherubs, thrilling the faded, tattered flags that hung over Christ's altar, each one bought, who shall dare say by how many lives, hovering round the scutcheons that spoke of a pride outliving the grave, as if to render homage to the vanities of the herald's art, the music of St.

Edgar's organ floated grandly. There was not another like it in all the eastern counties—even that in Wichnor Cathedral was considered second to it in sweetness—and the player who now brought out its notes was one capable of doing ample justice to the instrument she touched.

It was an old church this of St. Edgar's, built at the same time as the abbey it had so long outlasted. Some of its tombs were of more than usual interest. There was one of a former queen of France, who in her young widowhood had married an English gentleman. The story was pretty enough in its way, and its heroine had been fair and wilful enough in her time for a more tender interest than that attaching to her as sister, daughter, wife of kings, to be connected with her memory. The stained glass windows were of various dates, but you knew the modern at a glance, though their de-

signers had done their very best to emulate the mellow tints, and the deep unfathomable richness of the purples and reds of the olden time. Labour in vain! There are some things the nineteenth century cannot do, let it bring steam and electricity to what perfection it may. We can neither write prayers nor fairy tales, still less stain windows, as those who have gone before us did.

The aisle was filled up by seats for the poor, thus losing a splendid avenue for processional display. But Low Church—the comfortable, contented lowness of forty years ago — was still good form at St. Ewald's. Else a Ritualist could have done great things with St. Edgar's Church. All the great people in the neighbourhood were moderate in their religious views and Conservative in their politics, not at all given to innovations, however fashion might recommend them. Of course the upper circle

in the town followed reverently the example the county set them; the leading professional people thought it only etiquette to do as their more aristocratic fellow-town-people did; the secondary grade followed their betters; the wine-merchants, auctioneers, &c., who formed the fourth stratum of what St. Ewald's termed society, believed exactly as the three classes above them thought fit to believe; and as to the tradespeople and the classes below them, no one ever considered their opinions on any matter whatever worth anything. I believe most ladies in St. Ewald's had an idea that their linendrapers and butchers went to heaven if they behaved themselves properly, gave good weight and measure, and at elections voted as their betters told them, but that it was quite another sort of heaven to that reserved for the *élite*. Everywhere in St. Ewald's you felt that

you breathed an atmosphere permeated by aristocracy. It was poor, but proud—even of its poverty. All the great families residing in its vicinity were more or less embarrassed, consequently in St. Ewald's riches were considered in rather bad taste than otherwise. But it held its head high above all the neighbouring towns, who owed their prosperity to manufactures or commerce, with a disdain that seldom took any more aggressive form than that of a jealous exclusiveness, and a strict scrutiny into the pretensions of any new-comer into its charmed circle.

Any young lady who made her *débüt* at a county ball at St. Ewald's was considered to have received a stamp secondary only to that given by a presentation at court. That was enough to frank her anywhere. It was quite a different affair at St. Bede's, where, as the people of St.

Ewald's said, any one went who had money, because at St. Bede's they had money and nothing else.

From St. Ewald's assembly rooms brewers were excluded as rigidly as butchers ; at St. Bede's a retired brewer was one of the stewards of the ball ; and between the two towns there was all the unspoken antagonism that might exist between a *nouveau riche* and a decayed Duchess of the Faubourg St. Germain.

There was a little Dissent at St. Ewald's. Not very much ; and the upper classes, if they thought of its existence at all, regarded it with a contemptuous wonder, but thought it hardly worth the trouble of disliking. Two or three families of the better class, even in St. Ewald's, deviated from the beaten track and went to chapel, but they were not shunned by their compeers on that account ;

on the contrary, they were looked upon as harmless eccentrics, to whom something might be forgiven on account of their good dinners and long standing in the town. A few of the lower classes went; but on the whole it was considered, even by the rector of St. Edgar's, and the vicar of St. John's, rather better that they should go to Little Bethel or the Tabernacle, or even to that most heterodox place of worship, the Old Town Meeting House, than play at skittles, or sadden themselves with beer, if they were really bent upon not going to church.

So, on the whole, the people of St. Ewald's might be considered to evince a very fair and gentlemanly spirit of toleration. It is possible that if they ever gave themselves the trouble to think on the matter, they might have thought that, even for Dissenters, there was a chance of

Heaven—that secondary Heaven to which tradespeople and the lower orders were to be admitted.

This being the state of feeling in St. Ewald's, it had been an easy matter for Mr. Charles Rosslyn to obtain permission for the former music teacher of his cousin Grace to practise on the organ of St. Edgar's, although the lady was ignored by all "society" in St. Ewald's, as the daughter of the minister of Old Town Meeting House. Grace had asked him to do this for Miss Cundleigh, and when he had obtained the required permission, it was doubtful which of the two ladies was the better pleased.

Grace knew just enough of music to be aware that she herself played very badly; she pleased her father, but she certainly did not please herself, when she sat down to the piano. She had been, at the school, Miss Cundleigh's worst pupil and best

friend; she had shown the poor, pale, middle-aged, unattractive woman, a thousand little kindnesses, and defended her bravely against the impertinences of the other girls; and when the music teacher, at her mother's death, came to St. Ewald's to keep house for her father, Grace had hastened to renew the acquaintance, and, not content with frequent tributes of fruit and poultry, fresh eggs and butter, had exerted herself to obtain for Miss Cundleigh the privilege of playing on the magnificent organ of St. Edgar's.

And she played it grandly! She had no beauty, and possessed none of those nameless charms which with some women more than compensate for their deficiencies in personal attraction. She was a neat dresser, but knew nothing of the graces of the toilet; a ribbon, a dress, a piece of lace, was with her just a ribbon, a piece of lace,

a dress, and nothing more ; no mysterious inexplicable adjunct of herself, giving and deriving a charm ; she had just her music, instead of grace, charm, or loveliness, just her wonderful playing to prevent her being altogether like any other ordinary little woman in the world.

It was doubtful whether this playing meant for her one half as much as it did for Grace, whether the triumphant rise and swell of the organ, or the long low minor tones that floated sadly through the aisles of the church ever woke in the player's soul the passion and the sorrow, the triumph and the joy, that they called forth in her listener. If she was happy to play, Grace was a thousand times happier to hear.

The organ told her a thousand things that without it she would have hardly dared to dream ; gave shape and colour to

her wildest fancies, heightened her love, awoke her imagination—it was like wine or opium to this dreamy half-taught girl, with her unformed soul, and her awakening mind; to Anne Cundleigh it was simply an inexpensive relaxation, and a graceful and welcome change from the prosaic realities of her every-day life. She had music at her fingers' ends, but Grace had it in her very soul.

One autumn morning, about three months after the storm, and the night which had brought John Rosslyn and Dr. Langton so unwelcome a guest, Grace was sitting in the nave of St. Edgar's listening to Anne's playing. She had walked over that morning from the Grange, and announced her intention of spending the day with the Cundleighs. She was always welcome, let the fare be ever so plain; their poverty was an accepted fact with Grace, so there was an end of all

attempts to hide it. Then she had persuaded Anne to leave her plain sewing, promising to help her with it on their return to the cottage—which promise Anne had too much regard for the garment she was manufacturing to avail herself of—and the two had gone together to St. Edgar's. Then Grace had just an hour of heaven, just an hour, at any rate, to dream all sorts of possible and impossible things about her future, to revel in that enchanted land where her idol was to be all her own, and everything that this world could give him—fame, wealth, honour—were to be flung at his feet as freely as her love. The very happiest hours in all her life were spent in listening to the organ of St. Edgar's, the hours when she loved most fondly, and felt herself most sure and most worthy of being loved again. She was a queen while she heard its music, and her love was her king

and hero. She was famous, and he was proud of her fame: for all her wild thoughts and imaginings she had found words and music in which he and many besides him rejoiced. He had reason to be proud of her, but not one tenth part so much as she had to be proud of him. In all these visions of hers it was her greatest happiness to feel that she gave a little, but that he was able to give so much.

Anne Cundleigh came down the stairs at last, and went up to Grace, who sat as still and absorbed as if the music had not ceased. Anne was a quiet-looking little woman of about forty, the very last from whom one would have thought all that volume of melody proceeded. She had a noiseless step, and a soft low voice, and when you looked at her you felt that here was a woman to whom life had given very little; not even the sustaining strength that great

sacrifices and heavy trials call forth. She looked born to be a teacher. The art that to another might have brought repute and competence, if not wealth, only served with her as a means by which to gain some small pittance to add to the slender income that she had to manage, and to make her a drudge and a slave to girls with ears that were more than deaf, and fingers that seemed to have an instinctive knowledge only how to draw discord from the instrument they touched. She was worn and wrinkled, with lines about her temples and her mouth that told of a thousand petty cares and small troubles. Her thin hair was streaked with grey, and her cheap black dress, though neat and made with some little regard to fashion, showed plainly that its wearer was one who took little pride and less pleasure in the adornment of herself.

She touched Grace on the shoulder.

“Come from dream-land. I have those shirts to finish, and in the afternoon I have two new pupils I must attend.”

“Whose children are they? Lady Gray is home, I hear, and the Honourable Mr. Burnes has a houseful.”

“Lady Gray or the Honourable Mr. Burnes!” said Anne Cundleigh, with a little quiet amusement; “Gracie, such great dames would never come to me. They wouldn’t think it possible that the daughter of the minister of the Old Town meeting-house could be capable of teaching their children anything. These new pupils are the daughters of our butcher. We’re not great eaters, but still what a comfort it is to think that I shall have some little set-off against his bill.”

Grace looked very scornful.

“I wonder at you, Anne! I think it’s

bad enough to have to teach at all ; breaking stones on the high-road is nothing to it, I should say ; but if you must teach, why not keep to ladies ? there are plenty in the town who ought to be proud to have you."

"You're mistaken, Gracie ; the ladies won't have me. Things are better in St. Ewald's than in some places, but still people won't forget that that papa is a Dissenting minister. I'm sure I'm much obliged to the butcher's wife for overlooking the fact."

"She has got the best teacher in the town through doing so," said Grace.

"Well, I think teaching music *is* one of the few things I know how to do," observed Anne Cundleigh, "and while I am gone this afternoon, Gracie, you must read to papa—his eyes are failing him—and I think, if you are not too shy, I shall give

you another auditor, the old gentleman who lodges next door. Mrs. Payne would never forgive me if she heard me use that expression, though; I should have called him her inmate; papa and he have become acquainted over the garden palings, and at one end where Mrs. Payne's dog has made a way through after our cat, they have broken away so far that there is room for Mr. Ross to come through with a little help. Mrs. Payne doesn't like it I'm afraid, but the poor gentleman does, and so with the help of his stick and papa's arm, he finds his way through to our side."

"What is the matter with him that he wants so much help?" asked Grace, carelessly. She did not feel greatly interested in the ailments of an infirm old man. "Gout, I suppose—that's always the trouble, isn't it, with old gentlemen?"

"Not with this one. He has not long

since had a rheumatic fever, and it has left great stiffness and weakness behind; Mrs. Payne is a good nurse, and her rooms are pleasant and airy, and he came to her to be taken care of. Papa and he get on very well together. You see," she said, with a little smile, "Mr. Ross is like you, a good listener."

"So any one ought to be, whenever your father talks or you play, Anne. I never wish myself a man so much as when I am with your father. And yet I don't know, not even to be a man—to work, and strive, and *live*, for it is men that live—it seems to me that we only exist—would I give up being a woman. I think, after all, we have a happiness and blessedness that men know nothing of."

She paused, with a heightened colour that almost told her secret, and she looked, as she spoke, upon the tomb of the fair girl-

queen, who had thought so little of her royal state when weighed against her love, and then she said, "After all, men cannot serve as we do;" she meant love: she was quite content to give more than she received, to worship humbly, to kiss the cheek if it was only tendered to her, and this word "serve" conveyed all that she intended.

"No, we have that privilege," said Anne Cundleigh, "and I do not think they would care to rob us of it." And then the two went away through the quiet town, and out into the road that led from it into the open country.

END OF VOL. I.

